

PICCADILLY BASIN TO PRESTON BROOK ROCHDALE AND BRIDGEWATER CANALS

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TRIP TYPE : SOLO CYCLE

OBJECTIVE : TAKE THE TRAIN FROM RUNCORN EAST TO MANCHESTER
PICCADILLY, AND CYCLE BACK ALONG THE ROCHDALE
AND BRIDGEWATER CANALS

DISTANCE : 27 MILES

TIME : 3.5 HOURS, 7.6 MPH

NICHOLSON : GUIDE 5, PP 28-36

COSTS : FREE PARKING AT PRESTON BROOK. TRAIN FROM
RUNCORN EAST TO MANCHESTER PICCADILLY ~£9
(PRICES VARY DEPENDING ON SERVICE)

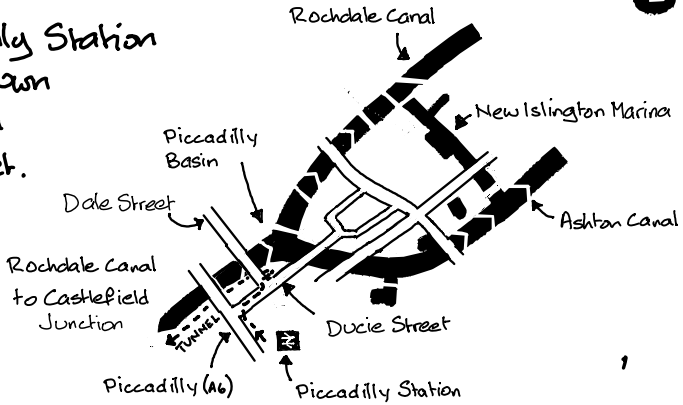
DIFFICULTY : FAIR

OVERVIEW : An interesting ride on mainly decent towpaths. The ride starts in the centre of Manchester, passing through the heart of the city centre and the recently developed Castlefields Basin, then onward alongside Manchester Ship Canal through industrial Trafford, to Sale and Altrincham and into the Cheshire countryside, finishing on the outskirts of Runcorn. There are a couple of carries, and a bit of mud and tree roots on a grassy path towards the end.

1. PRESTON BROOK TO PICCADILLY BASIN (1 MILE)

Park your car in Dukes Wharf, Runcorn WA7 3AE. This is a narrowish cul-de-sac but there are convenient places to park that don't block access. Cycle back along Murdishaw Avenue, and turn right into Gorsewood Road. Don't be tempted to cut across the paths through the estate as you will get lost several times as I did. Gorsewood Road becomes St. Martins Lane. Turn left on Aldersgate Avenue, and right on Barnfield Avenue. Runcorn East station is on your left. Cross the footbridge for trains to Manchester. Trains are direct, 1 per hour.

Emerging from Piccadilly Station main entrance head down the approach and turn right into Ducie Street. As you turn left into Dale Street there is a narrow entrance to your right, and a path leading down to the Rochdale Canal.



2. PICCADILLY BASIN TO WATERS MEETING JUNCTION (4 MILES)

The towpath is metalled, with a few road sections. Double back sharp left down the steps and go through the tunnel which emerges at the far side of Piccadilly (A6). The towpath rises to Minshull St., where you cross both the street and the canal, turning down onto Canal St., which is often busy with restaurants and bars. Continue to Princess Street (the final 100m is shut off as of October 2024 due to building works, and you need to detour via Whitworth St.) Continue to Castlefields Basin, where the Rochdale Canal ends and the Bridgewater begins. There is some spectacular redevelopment here, as well as much historic engineering work.



Castlefield Basin, Bridgewater Canal

At Castle Street turn right across the bridge then head towards Barga Bar and take the pedestrian bridge across the basin. After crossing head down the ramp then sharp left back underneath

the bridge onto the towpath which is on the left of the canal. There are several cobbled ramps, both up and down over former offshoots and basins. These are slippery and difficult to ride, especially in the wet.

Continue past Old Trafford football ground to Waters Meeting Junction.

3. WATERS MEETING JUNCTION TO PRESTON BROOK (21 MILES)

Turn left at the junction. The towpath is still metalled, through Sale and all the way past Altrincham, after which it turns to earth, then grass. At points there is a narrow concrete strip. Towards the end it is muddy as it passes through woods, requiring you to walk short sections. There are tree roots to negotiate as well, but I would still class the ride as FAIR overall.

The Bulls Head at Lymm (which looks like a nice village) is well positioned for refreshments, as is the London Bridge Inn at Stockton Heath.

Just before the M56 motorway bridge is the junction with the Trent & Mersey Canal. Cross the footbridge, and double back right on the track which wiggles between houses before emerging at the end of Dukes Wharf, along which your car is waiting.

