

SOLIHULL TO LEAMINGTON SPA GRAND UNION CANAL

1

TRIP TYPE : SOLO CYCLE

OBJECTIVE : TAKE THE TRAIN FROM LEAMINGTON SPA TO SOLIHULL.
CYCLE BACK DOWN THE GRAND UNION CANAL, PAST
KINGSWOOD JUNCTION AND A COUPLE OF SPECTACULAR
SETS OF LOCKS, THROUGH WARWICK BACK TO LEAMINGTON
SPA

DISTANCE : 22 MILES

TIME : 3.0 HOURS, 7.3 mph

NICHOLSON : GUIDE 3, 70 124-133 (also in Guide 1)

COSTS : FREE PARKING IN LEAMINGTON SPA. TRAIN FROM
LEAMINGTON SPA TO SOLIHULL £7.70

DIFFICULTY : MODERATE

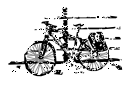
OVERVIEW : A mainly rural ride with plenty of interest, especially Knowle Locks, Kingswood Junction, and Hatton Locks. I would definitely recommend doing the ride north to south (Solihull + Leamington Spa) as a) it is downhill and b) the easy part of the ride is at the end. The ride is classed as moderate because of the narrow, uneven, muddy towpath in parts, and the steps at Shrewley Tunnel are awkward.

1. SOLIHULL TO KINGSWOOD JUNCTION (9 MILES)

Park your car on Kingsway, Leamington Spa, CV31 3LN. Cycle down Tackbrook Road and cross Warwick Road to the station. Trains to Solihull are 2 per hour and take 36 minutes. No reservation is required on Chiltern Railways and the trains are very quaint. There is a lovely art deco café at the station which is worth a visit.



Leaving Solihull Station head up Station Approach to Blossomfield Road, B4102. Turn left, and at the roundabout take Lode Lane which is well signed. Continue for approximately 1 mile then turn right on Rowood Drive. The canal is 200m along, and there are steep steps down to your right. To avoid these steps continue up Lode Lane to Bridge 81, which has much shallower steps down to the towpath.

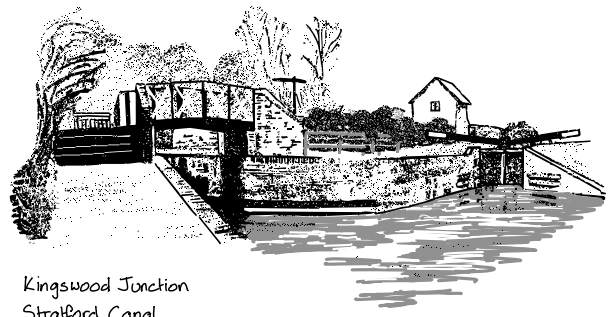


In either case turn right (south east) along the canal. The towpath is excellent all the way out of Solihull. You are in a parallel, calm, tranquil world. Both the canal and towpath are well maintained along the tree-lined route. There are some earth sections with a few puddles but it is still flat and wide.

It then deteriorates, becoming stony and narrow, a bit slippery when wet but cyclable all the way to Knowle locks. These locks have an unusual design, being built out from the slope instead of set into it as is usual.

After Black Boy Bridge (69) the towpath worsens. It is particularly bad between the pipe bridge and Rising Lane Bridge (66) where it is bumpy, earthen and overgrown. Then there is a nice straight section down to Kingswood Junction, but watch out for punctures as there is a lot of hawthorn here.

Cross the Footbridge at Kingswood Junction and turn right down the Lapworth link to the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal junction, which is well worth a look



Kingswood Junction
Stratford Canal

around, and a good place for lunch. You will also pass this on the Shirley to Stafford ride. Return to the Grand Union and turn right to continue south.

2. KINGSWOOD JUNCTION TO LEAMINGTON SPA (13M)

The towpath is not so good, stony, narrow and grassy in places. After 3 miles you come to Shrewley Tunnel. The towpath rises into a smaller tunnel, which ends with a steep flight of steps. Cross the road, following the signed track, which cuts through woodland then drops back down to the canal.

Carry on for a further 2 miles of bumpy towpath to the top of Hatton Locks, where there is a café. You've done the difficult bit, the rest of the ride is a breeze, starting with a freewheel descent on an excellent surface down the 21 locks, which is popular with walkers so take care

At the foot of the locks you are almost in Warwick. You can't cycle along the short Saltisford Arm on the opposite side to the towpath. Continue through Warwick to Leamington Spa. Leave the canal at Tackbrook Road, bridge 41. Turn right up the hill to Kingsway and your car.

Once I have done the pds in Leamington Spa in April 2025 I'll be able to recommend one or two.

