

Walk the Way in a Day

Walk 37 Leeds & Liverpool Canal

A pleasant walk following the Pennine Way over gently rolling pasture, returning on the towpath beside the Leeds & Liverpool Canal as it winds lazily through an area of drumlins. Entertainment is provided by canal boats negotiating the locks.

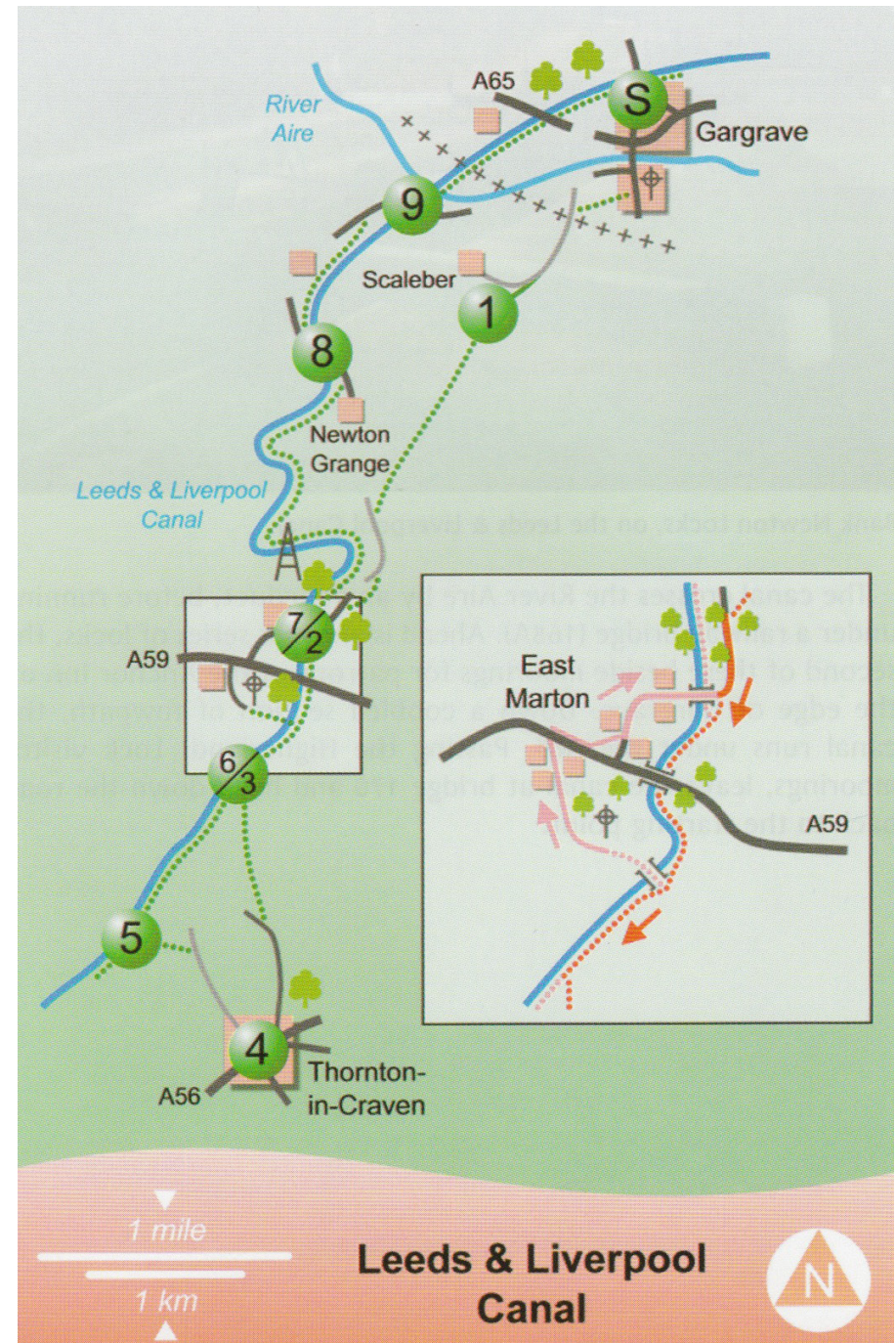


Length:	11¼ miles (18 kilometres)
Ascent:	574 feet (175 metres)
Highest Point:	525 feet (160 metres)
Map(s):	OS Explorer OL Maps 2 ('Yorkshire Dales - Southern & Western Areas') (South Sheet) and 21 ('South Pennines') (North Sheet)
Starting Point:	North Street car park, Gargrave (SD 932 543)
Facilities:	Full range of services.
Website:	http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-37-leeds-and-liverpool-canal

The 'Bers'

The first part of the walk follows the Pennine Way south-west from Gargrave to East Marton, a total of 2¾ miles (4¼ kilometres). Over the busy A65, join an unclassified road heading south, crossing the River Aire by a stone bridge and heading towards St. Andrew's Church. Passing the Masons Arms Inn, ignore a turning on the right. A finger sign shows the Pennine Way joining a path running across fields. Meeting the tree-shaded Mosber Lane, turn left and cross over the railway by a bridge. As the lane opens-out, stay on the hardcore track as it heads towards a tall marker post (1 = SD 923 531).

Leaving the track at this point, continue south-west, as though towards



the Green Bank transmitter. The faint path runs over fields of lush grass that are home to dairy cattle. Crossing a drainage channel by a footbridge, head diagonally over another field to join a lane. The Pennine Way soon leaves the track, crossing fields used for show-jumping practice and skirting a wood. Rejoining the lane - now a tree-shaded road - Williamson Bridge (canal bridge 162) is soon reached. Over the bridge is the hamlet of East Marton, although the Pennine Way turns down onto the canal towpath (2 = SD 910 511).

Thornton-in-Craven

The next part of the walk follows the Pennine Way south for 1¾ miles (3 kilometres) to Thornton-in-Craven, initially on the canal towpath. Passing the East Marton visitor moorings, the canal soon runs under a curious double-arched bridge (161). The top deck was added when the road (now A59) was upgraded to make it suitable for motorised traffic. A marker stone gives the distances to Leeds (38¼ miles) and Liverpool (89 miles). Further along the way an arched bridge (160) is passed. Turning off the towpath just before meeting a gate, head down to a fence stile (3 = SD 907 503).

Over a boggy field, a steep climb leads to the crest of a hillock (Langber Hill). Heading downhill, an old marker stone is passed. Crossing a stream by a slab bridge, head up to a gate and continue over fields towards some farm buildings. Turning left onto an access road, this eventually becomes a lane (Cam Lane) flanked by attractive cottages. Arriving at the busy A56, turn right and follow the pavement through Thornton-in-Craven, looking for a driveway leading to the start of a farm track (4 = SD 907 485).

East Marton

The first part of the return route runs 2½ miles (4¼ kilometres) back to East Marton, rejoining the canal towpath along the way. Passing between cottages, follow the track north-west down the side of a field before turning onto a beaten path running across a meadow towards a drumlin (Castleber Hill). Crossing a small stream by a slab bridge, head up onto the domed

hillock. Cresting the rise, aim towards a gate at the corner of the field, where the towpath is rejoined (5 = SD 899 492).

The canal runs along an embankment lined with ash and hawthorn as it heads north-east. Anglers are a common sight, while ducks and swans shelter among the reeds. Eventually the point at which the Pennine Way earlier left the towpath is met (6 = SD 907 503). Arriving back at bridge 160, this time leave the towpath and cross over the canal. Passing through the churchyard at St. Peter's Church, exit onto an access road leading up to the A59. Crossing the busy main road, head down the pavement towards the Cross Keys Inn, turning onto an unclassified road signed for Bank Newton. The tree-lined lane runs past the Abbot's Harbour café, stables and cottages before crossing the canal by Williamson Bridge (162) (7 = SD 910 511).

Canal Boats

The brightly painted boats that frequent the Leeds & Liverpool Canal feature a wonderful assortment of names, including Pineberry, Loch Maree, Rubyann, Jester, Pearl Barley, Green Frog and Saffron. A dredger operating in the area is appropriately named 'The Pennine Way'.

Bank Newton

From here the return route follows the canal towpath, 4 miles (6½ kilometres) back to Gargrave. Heading back down to the canal side, this time pass under the bridge and follow the towpath north through a wooded cutting. Emerging from the cutting, the Green Bank transmitter is just ahead. Passing under another bridge (163), the canal runs along an embankment, snaking about as it seeks a level course through an area of drumlins. Passing bridge 164, then some moorings, a leafy lane is joined before the canal is crossed by bridge 165 (8 = SD 912 528). Here there is the option of following a quiet road back to Gargrave - but only if failing daylight means there is a real danger of falling into the canal!

Beside the bridge, a gate leads back down to the towpath, which now

follows the left-hand side of the canal, passing the Bank Newton long-term moorings. Ahead is a procession of seven locks. These are always busy during summer, and you may be called upon to lend a hand! The towpath runs gently downhill as the canal swings around to head north-east. Passing an old lock-keepers cottage and some moorings, a gate leads to the road, which runs beside the canal for a way. Crossing Priest Holme Bridge (168), turn onto a path spiralling back down to the towpath, which returns to the right-hand side of the canal (9 = SD 918 537).

The canal crosses the River Aire by an aqueduct, before running under a railway bridge (168A). Ahead is another series of locks, the second of these beside moorings for patrons of the Anchor Inn on the edge of Gargrave. Down a cobbled section of towpath, the canal runs under the A65. Passing the Higherlands Lock visitor moorings, leave the canal at bridge 170 and head down the road back to the starting point.

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