



British  
Waterways

# THE STOURPORT RING A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY



EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

European Regional  
Development Fund



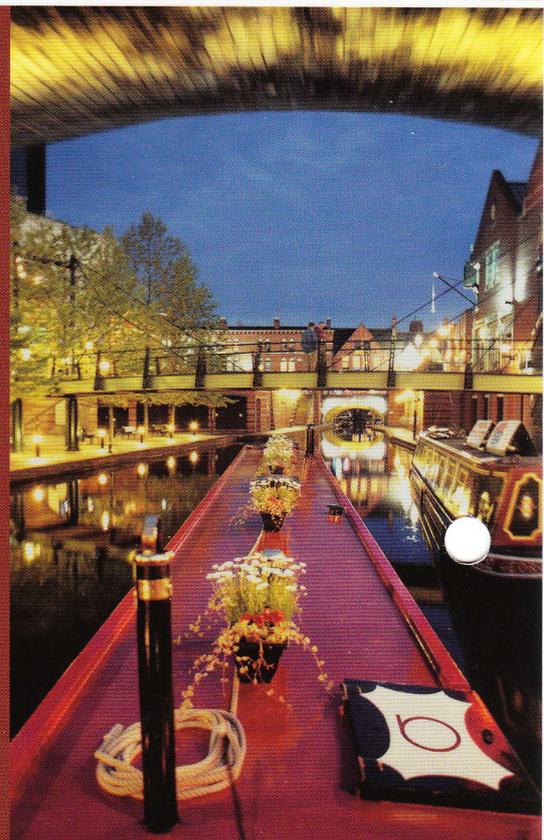
Advantage  
West Midlands



## DISCOVER THE SECRET

Imagine your perfect canal cruise. Where would it take you? Through spectacular rural scenery? Past world class tourist attractions and rare wildlife habitats? Into cosmopolitan cities with superb shopping and restaurants? Welcome to The Stourport Ring.

It's one of the Heart of England's best kept secrets, but for boaters in the know, The Stourport Ring has all the ingredients of an ideal holiday. For sheer variety, it is almost without parallel. In the space of a few hours, you can travel from the cosmopolitan heart of Birmingham, through The Black Country with its evocative reminders of our industrial past to the tranquillity of rural England at its best. And, whether you're six or sixty, you'll find plenty of things to see and do.



This magazine will give you a taster of some of the many places you could visit en route, plus useful contact numbers. To find out more, why not book for a week cruising the unique sights and sounds of The Stourport Ring?

## PLACES TO STAY

One of the best things about cruising the canals is that there are so many visitor moorings where you can moor up en route. On The Stourport Ring, that means you could moor up right in the bustling heart of the city, deep in rural countryside or even inside one of the canalside tourist attractions. So, you're right there at the start of the day and you can be back on board as soon as you're ready to put your feet up. Many of the mooring sites are offside (on the opposite side to the towpath) or gated to give you additional privacy. Some ideas of where to moor up are provided in the 'Places of Interest' section. Contact the Canal Information Centre for comprehensive listings of all visitor mooring facilities.

## A FAVOURITE WITH THE KIDS

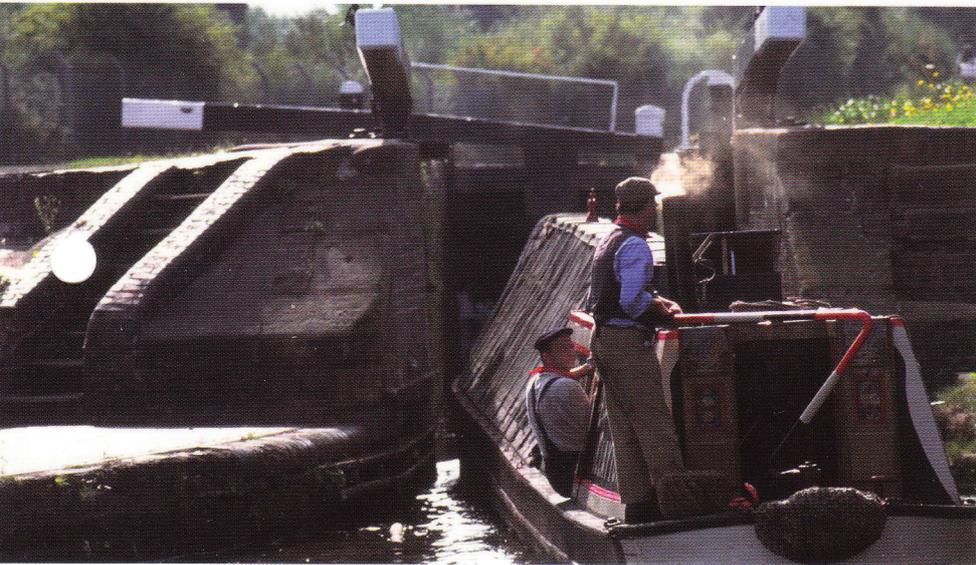
Keeping the kids entertained is the secret to a successful holiday. Kids and canal holidays are a good combination – there's always lots of changing scenery for them to see and wildlife to watch out for. But The Stourport Ring gives you lots of fascinating things to do when you moor up, too. The Commandery Museum in Worcester takes you right into the bloody heart of battle with life-size dioramas of England's Civil War. Alternatively take a trip to Cadbury World - a chocoholic's paradise - and have a go at making



your own chocolates. Or experience life from a bygone age at The Black Country Living Museum, where you can go to school in an old fashioned school house, take a trip down a coal mine or visit the traditional funfair with its helter-skelter, swingboats and cakewalk. Sure to provoke a fit of the giggles is the three-seater earth closet rescued from Leominster and now part of an amazing display at the Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings, which also includes a full-size working windmill. And, while you might be a long way from the seaside, you're not far from The National Sea Life Centre, home to a host of different species, including two magnificent giant green turtles.

## BLACK COUNTRY PAST AND PRESENT

The Black Country of yesteryear was a very different place to that which you experience today. During the Industrial Revolution, the area would have been lit by furnaces at night and the landscape was dominated by smoke from manufacturing industries, earning it its name of The Black Country. The canals - now a peaceful retreat from the hectic pace of modern life and a home to many diverse species of wildlife - were the motorways of their day, bringing coal to power the factories.

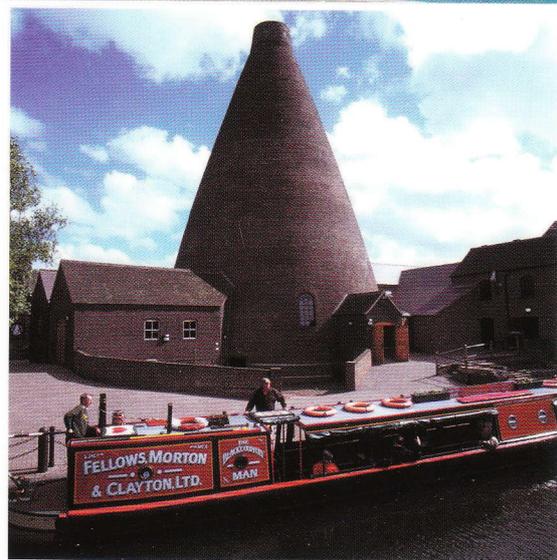
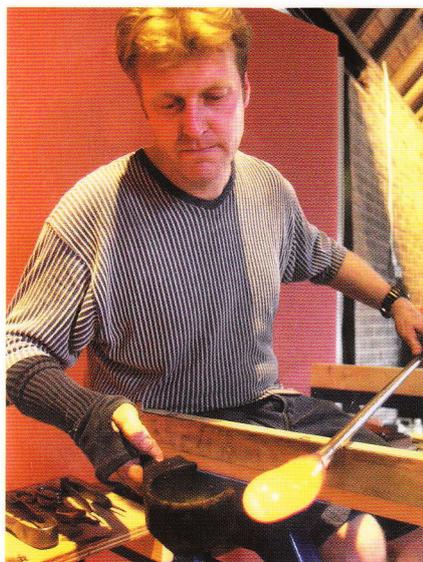


Beneath the surface of The Black Country lies a rich loamy earth, mixing with a thirty foot coal seam, and it was this that attracted the huge diversity of different manufacturing industries to the area, including leather, glass, iron and steel, locks, chain-making and even - despite its distance from the sea - anchors! Did you know, all of the glass used to build Crystal Palace was made here in Smethwick and transported to London by boat? Not a single pane was broken en route!

Telltale clues to The Black Country's industrial past are all around, if you know where to look. Rope marks on bridges tell of a time when horses used to tow narrowboats along the canals, laden with cargoes as diverse as cocoa crumb, coal and tomatoes. Abandoned buildings that were once thriving factories are gradually being reborn as heritage centres and museums, celebrating the Black Country's industrial heritage. Among them - and well worth a visit while you are in the area - is The Red House Glass Cone where you can watch glass being made in time-honoured fashion and buy souvenirs to take home. And at The Black Country Living Museum you can not only

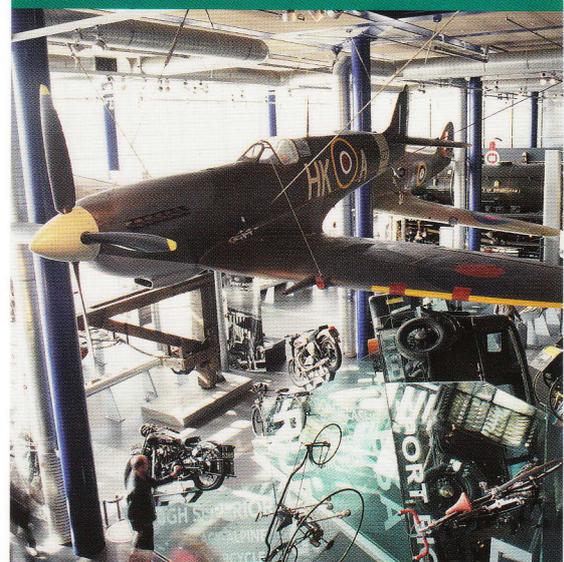
learn about the history of the area but relive it through live demonstrations which include chain and nail making. Nowhere brings you closer to the past than this, where the sights, sounds and even the smells of times gone by are recreated with absolute accuracy.

These days, The Black Country is as likely to be visited for its green open spaces and cosmopolitan shopping as it is for its industrial heritage. But, with so much variety on offer, whatever you love to do, you'll love to do it in The Black Country.

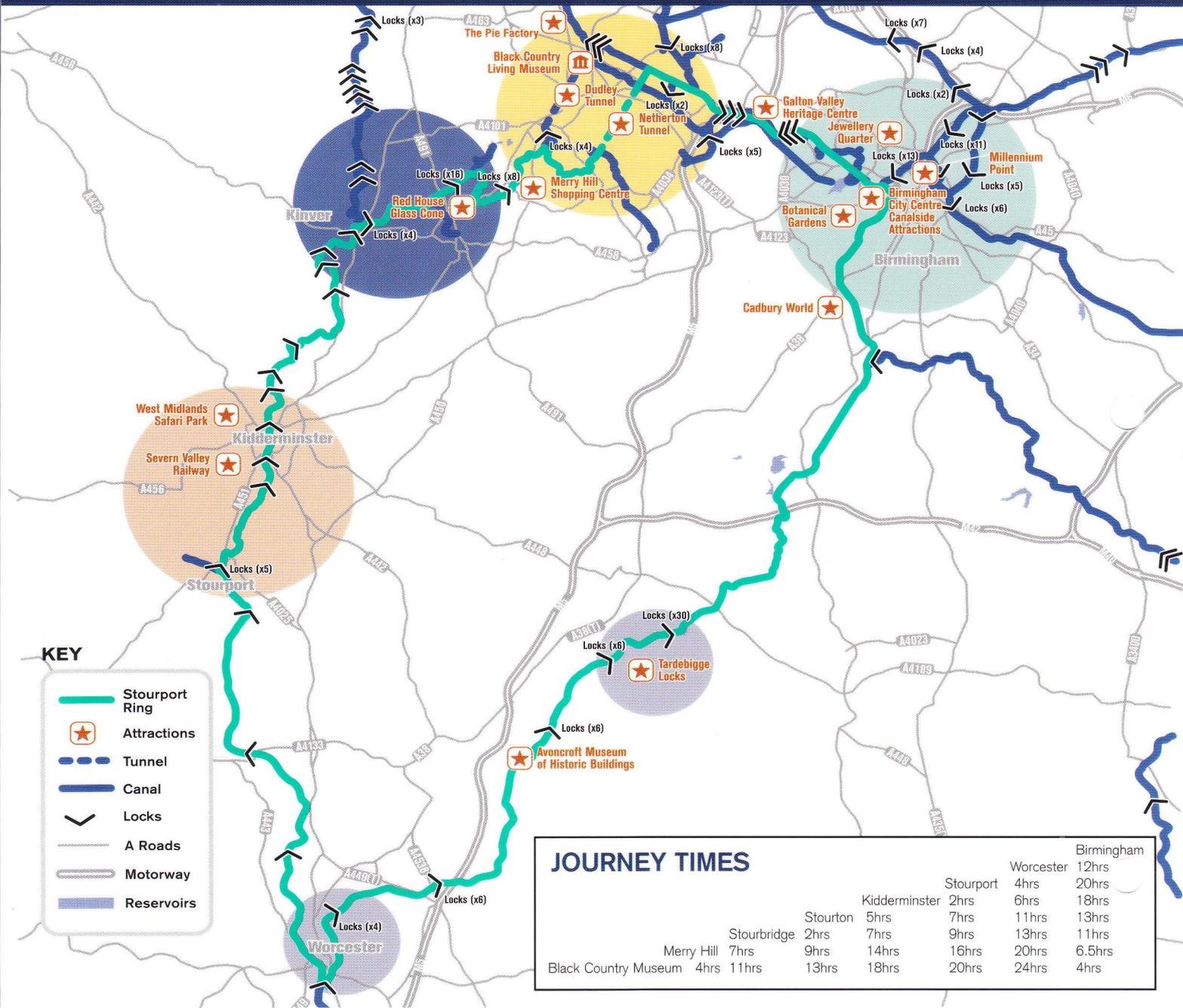


## ALL WEATHER HOLIDAY

Seasoned British holidaymakers know that it makes sense to plan for all weathers and one of the great things about The Stourport Ring is that there's loads to do come rain or shine. You might want to stop off at Cadbury World for a whistle stop tour of the history of chocolate (Cadbury has a long association with canals. In days gone by, narrowboats brought sugar from Liverpool and milk from Cheshire to its Bournville factory). If you fancy a day's shopping, there's loads of all-weather shopping centres en route, including Merry Hill or The Mailbox. Or how about a trip on board a steam train at The Severn Valley Railway or a thought-provoking visit to Thinktank, Birmingham's amazing interactive museum of history, science and technology?



# FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND THE STOURPORT RING



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## WORCESTER

Think of Worcester and you might think of composer Edward Elgar, Royal Worcester Porcelain, the famous Lea & Perrins Worcester sauce and the location of one of England's finest Cathedrals. But there's more - as well as the large Crown Gate and Lychgate shopping centres, Worcester has many smaller, speciality shops, including the Reindeer Court Shopping Centre, converted from a 17th century coaching inn. A short cruise up the Worcester & Birmingham Canal, you'll come to the Commandery that tells the story of England's Civil War and Avoncroft Museum where you can see a fascinating display of historic buildings.

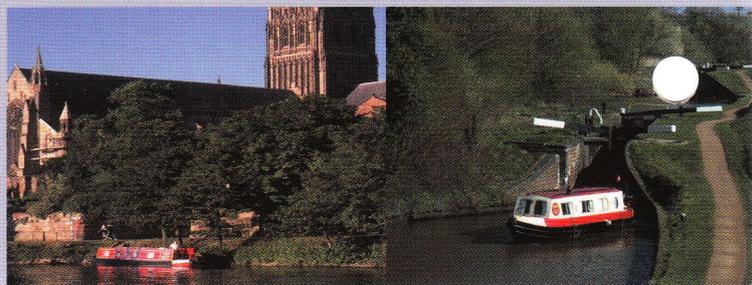
- Worcester City - There are a number of visitor moorings available
- The Commandery - Sidbury Lock 3
- Avoncroft Museum - Stoke Wharf or Bridge 48

Worcester Tourist Information Centre: 01905 726311

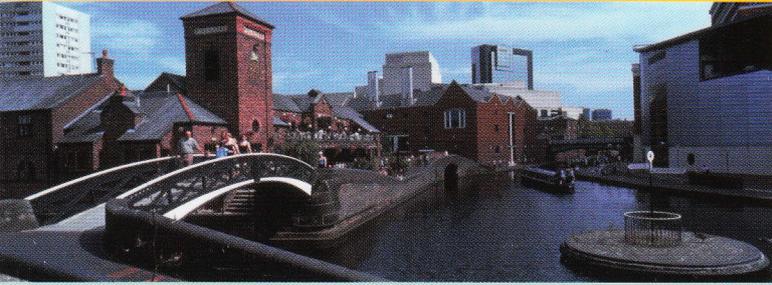
## TARDEBIGGE

An initiation in the art of lockwheeling - Tardebigge is the longest flight of locks in Britain with 30 locks climbing 220 feet through delightful rolling countryside. At the top, why not put your feet up, relax and enjoy a well-deserved drink at the conveniently located Tylers Lock on the Water pub.

- Tylers Lock on the Water - Tardebigge Top Lock



# PLACES OF INTEREST



## BIRMINGHAM

The canal winds its way through the heart of this vibrant and cosmopolitan city and provides a focus for city centre leisure, shopping, canalside living and a home for some of the UK's top tourist attractions.

Canalside attractions include The National Sea Life Centre, The Mailbox, The IKON Gallery, Symphony Hall, the National Indoor Arena, Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the International Convention Centre, plus a whole host of bars, pubs and restaurants.

Many other attractions are only a short bus ride or walk away and include: The Jewellery Quarter, Cadbury World, Thinktank, cinemas, museums, Birmingham's central shopping area including the new Bullring, art galleries and even more varied places to eat and drink.

- 🚗 Birmingham City Centre – There are a range of moorings to suit your stay including 24 hour, 48 hour, 7 day and 14 day moorings.

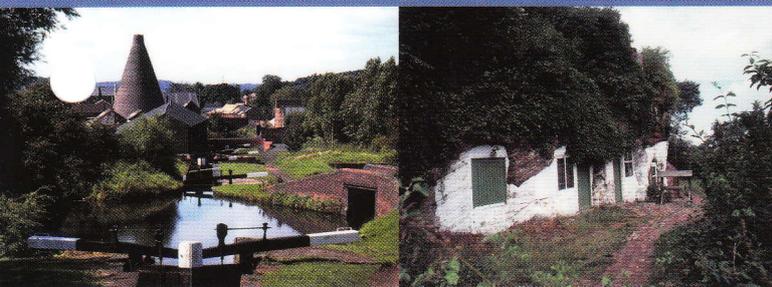
British Waterways Canal Information Centre: 0121 632 6845  
Birmingham Tourist Information: 0121 202 5099  
Centro (West Midlands travel information): 0121 200 2700

## STOURBRIDGE

The Stourbridge flight of 16 locks is at the heart of the world-famous glass quarter, that is home to the Red House Glass Cone, a preserved glass furnace that brings the history of glass making alive. On this part of the route, you'll pass the Delph Locks or 'Nine Locks' - a picturesque flight of locks (in fact there are only eight locks - one was lost as a result of mining subsidence during the 19th century). It's also worth stopping off at the picturesque village of Kinver to see the fascinating Rock Houses, carved out of the cliff face and remarkably similar in proportions to a narrowboat cabin!

- 🚗 The Red House Glass Cone Museum – Alongside the Museum itself (between locks 12 and 13)
- 🚗 National Trust Rock Houses – Kinver Lock

Black Country Tourism: 0121 569 2364/9



## BLACK COUNTRY

### Galton Valley

This hidden valley in the heart of Smethwick has two canals which tell the story of a rich industrial past and, today, have become home to an abundance of wildlife. Famous for its single span bridge, built by Thomas Telford in 1829 and Spon Lane Locks the oldest working locks in the UK. At its heart is Galton Valley Canal Heritage Centre, offering a fascinating insight into the area's history and providing welcome refreshments.

- 🚗 Outside Galton Valley Pumphouse on The Old Main Line

### Black Country Living Museum

At this fascinating museum where the past is brought vividly to life by enactors in period costume, you can take a lesson in an old fashioned school or ride on board a tramcar. Taste the food and drink our grandparents would have enjoyed at a 1930s fried fish shop and traditional inn. This unique living museum will transport you back in time and then bring you right up to date with a look at the thriving Black Country of today.

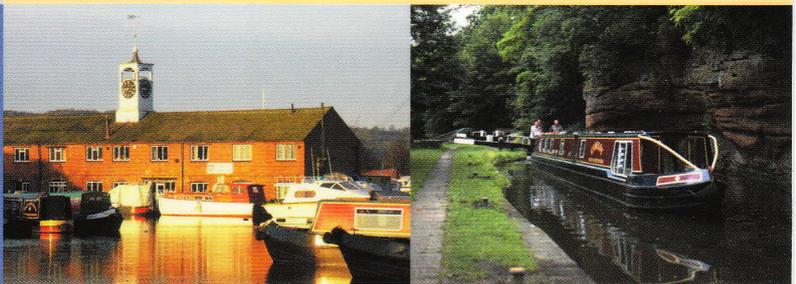
- 🚗 Inside the museum itself

### Merry Hill

21 million people a year visit the Merry Hill shopping centre – and it's easy to see why with over 200 stores all under one roof. When you've finished your shopping, there's the cosmopolitan Waterfront with its fantastic mix of restaurants, cafés and bars where you can sit and watch the world go by or catch the latest movie at the multi screen cinema complex.

- 🚗 The Waterfront

Black Country Tourism: 0121 569 2364/9

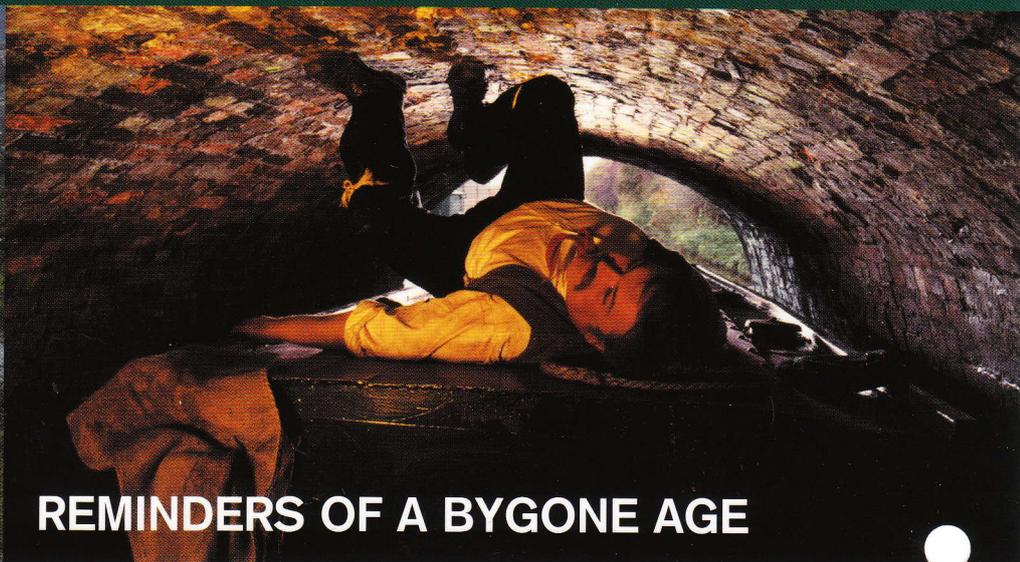
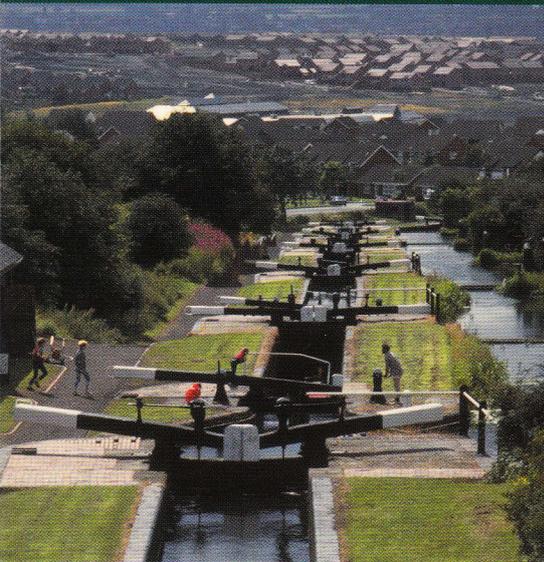


## STOURPORT/KIDDERMINSTER

If you experience a feeling of déjà vu as you travel along the Severn Valley Railway, it's probably because it is regularly used for filming. Step on board one of the Severn Valley Railway's perfectly preserved locomotives and be transported back to the golden age of steam, with its evocative sights, sounds and smells. The track runs along 16 miles of glorious countryside, passing many meticulously restored country stations. Why not disembark at Bewdley and take a trip to the safari park with its free roaming giraffes, elephants and big cats?

- 🚗 Severn Valley Railway and West Midlands Safari Park - Kidderminster Lock

Bewdley Tourist Information Centre: 01299 404740



## REMINDERS OF A BYGONE AGE

All around you, as you tour The Stourport Ring, you will see fascinating reminders of the region's industrial past. Many of them are unique and all offer clues to the way people lived and worked on and alongside the canals.

Look out along Galton Valley, for example, for the 150 foot cast-iron bridge built by Thomas Telford in 1829 which towers 71 feet above the canal. And, while you're in the area, why not pop into the Galton Valley Heritage Centre and arrange to visit the historic Galton Valley Pumphouse? Travel through some of the oldest locks in Britain at Spon Lane Junction and work

your way up the country's longest lock flight at Tardebigge. The Stourport Ring takes you through seven tunnels in total, however, there's a chance to notch up eight! Climb on board an electric powered boat at The Black Country Living Museum and take a trip into Dudley Tunnel to see the magnificent limestone caverns, and even have a go at 'legging' a boat through the tunnel.



## WILD ABOUT...

One of the highlights of a canal holiday is the chance to see wildlife in its natural habitat. And, it's interesting to note that despite the urban setting of Birmingham and The Black Country, they are a haven for many different species of wildlife. See how many you can spot as you glide past. If you're lucky, you may see water voles, kingfishers and even otters, which have recently made a welcome reappearance on the waterways.



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

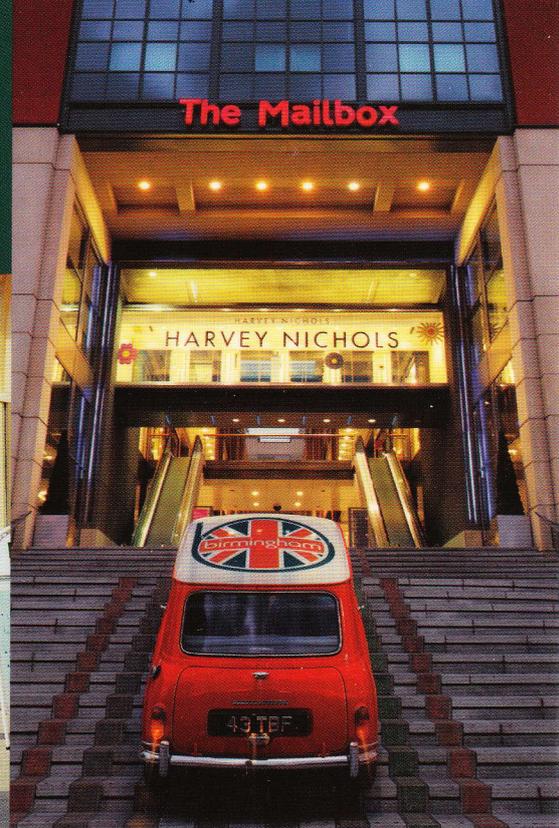
Ghost boats, fireworks, carnivals, traditional boat gatherings, jazz, art and theatre... just some of the exciting events taking place on and around The Stourport Ring throughout the year. Canals have become a focus for a huge range of different activities and it's a great idea to plan your holiday to coincide with an event. Pop into the Canal Information Centre in Birmingham and pick up a copy of the Events and Activities Guide for full details of what's on when.

Or ring the Centre on 0121 632 6845.

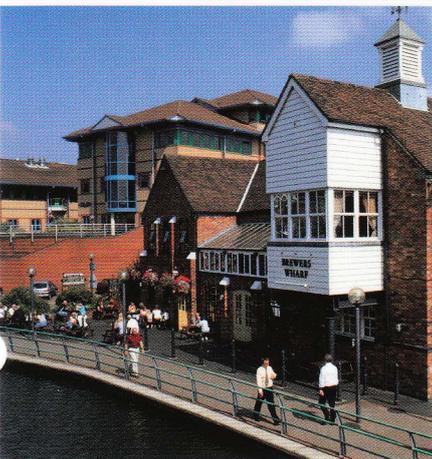
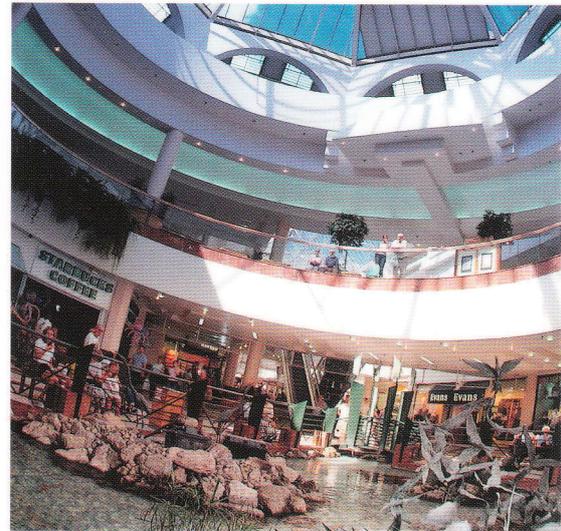
## ESSENTIAL SHOPPING STOPS

Shopping is one of the UK's favourite pastimes and The Stourport Ring takes you through some of the best shopping centres outside London.

Birmingham is now regarded as the regional shopping capital, with exclusive designer names like Christian Lacroix and Harvey Nichols at The Mailbox, right at the water's edge. Venture further into the city and visit the new Bullring, with its iconic Selfridges store and more than 140 shops. For bargain hunters, there are fabulous markets selling everything from vintage clothes to vegetables, and there are many individual shops at The Great Western Arcade, Burlington Arcade and City Plaza. As you pass through The Black Country, you won't want to miss Merry Hill, only five minutes walk away from the canal, which has over 200 stores under one roof. The high street market in Dudley is still arranged in its original medieval pattern and opens every day except Sunday.



Other essential stopovers for shoppers include Kidderminster's Weavers Wharf, Stourport on Severn's town centre, historic Worcester and a whole host of local speciality shops. There are also plenty of places to stock up on groceries - you'll pass many of the UK's major supermarkets plus a great selection of local shops. Stopping by boat is easy - just moor up, shop and load your goods straight into your fridge and cupboards.



## ON THE MENU...

There's a mouthwatering array of places to eat and drink as you cruise around The Stourport Ring. More than almost any other canal cruise, this tour gives you an opportunity to sample delicacies from all over the world as you pass through culturally diverse towns and cosmopolitan cities.

The balti is a great example of a dish that has been adopted from abroad as part of the culture of the West Midlands, and balti houses abound in the Birmingham and Black Country area. If you love to try a taste of different cultures, don't miss the huge variety of exotic restaurants in Birmingham (over 500 in all!), including American, French, Italian, Japanese, Spanish and Thai. There's plenty of cosmopolitan café bars adjacent to the canal, inviting you to sit, sip and watch the world go by. And, of course, no canal cruise would be complete without the

traditional canalside inn. The Stourport Ring has some of the finest pubs to choose from, including those at Delph Locks - an area which has earned itself the reputation of being the real ale Riviera. You can take a walk down the famous flight of locks to several excellent pubs, all serving cask-conditioned ale. If you're really hungry as you pass through Tipton on your way back from The Black Country Living Museum, why not challenge yourself to tackle one of the infamous 2lb 'Desperate Dan' cow pies at The Pie Factory.



## POP IN, PICK UP EVERYTHING YOU NEED FROM THE CANAL INFORMATION CENTRE



British Waterways' Canal Information Centre is a great place to call or visit when you're planning your trip. It stocks everything from maps and guidebooks to leaflets about canalside tourist attractions, events, visitor moorings and places to visit. There's even a window mounted 'touch screen' presentation providing essential visitor information 24 hours a day.

It's also a great place to stop whilst on your cruise – there are plenty of canal-related goodies on offer including gifts, books, videos, art prints and pocket money souvenirs.

**For further information about the UK's canal network please contact:**

British Waterways Canal Information Centre  
Gas Street Basin, 42A Gas Street, Birmingham B1 2JT. Tel/Fax: 0121 632 6845  
Email: [birminghaminfo@britishwaterways.co.uk](mailto:birminghaminfo@britishwaterways.co.uk)

[www.britishwaterways.co.uk](http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk) [www.waterscape.com](http://www.waterscape.com)

**Opening Times:**

Winter Opening Times (1 October to 31 March)  
10am to 4pm Wednesday to Sunday  
Summer Opening Times (1 April to 30 September)  
9.30am to 5.30pm Wednesday to Sunday

**Safety first:**

The Canal Information Centre can also provide you with a copy of our Waterway Code and Boaters Handbook that give advice on how you can make your trip to the canal a safe one.

**ERDF funding:**

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**Photography**

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