



Canal &
River Trust

A walk from Tardebigge to Stoke Prior

The mighty Tardebigge is the longest lock flight in Britain – 30 locks and a walker's rural delight set in an uplifting panorama of open countryside.

Over 200 years ago, a line stretching 30 miles was furrowed out of the earth with shovels. At one end was Birmingham and at the other Worcester and the River Severn. A canal was born for the transportation of porcelain pots and Cadbury's chocolate, and now lives on for leisure boats.

Despite the canal being named after two cities, the walker's treat lies in the rural miles between. This isn't just a rural amble, it's a journey carrying narrowboats 220 feet uphill and downhill.



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We're the UK's largest canal charity, looking after
2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England and Wales.

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The Walk

- 1 Tardebigge Wharf is home to the 'Birmingham', a tug boat built in 1912. Go and take a look if you have time.
- 2 Join the towpath opposite Tardebigge Wharf via the B4184.
- 3 Tardebigge Church overlooks the canal from the hillside. Worth the detour on a clear day for a fabulous view.
- 4 At Tardebigge Top Lock and cottage, a plaque commemorates the meeting here between Tom Rolt and Robert Aickman aboard narrowboat Cressy. Rolt and Aickman were the passion and brains behind the founding of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) in 1946.



This staggering route is dominated by black and white lock arms outstretched like chunky wooden wings in flight.

- 5 After bridges 56 and 55, locks come in quick succession as you pass the reservoir. Climb up here for sweeping views towards the Malvern Hills in the distance. Boat crews brace themselves before their cog-winding journey that will take hours longer than the same amble on foot. No overnight mooring is allowed through the flight, so it's a gruelling, nonstop, 4-hour or more, ascent or descent. This challenge makes the walker's journey even more entertaining, and everyone shares the flight with 'we're in it together' camaraderie.

- 6 The surroundings become leafier as you descend towards Half-way House Bridge no.51, then views open up again across fields of grazing sheep.
- 7 By lock 31, the former lock cottage is available for holiday let through Landmark Trust.
- 8 Just beyond Tardebigge Bottom Lock and boat moorings, continue under the bridge by the Queen's Head, and the first lock of the Stoke Flight comes into view.
- 9 Under bridge 45 at lock 24, moored boats stretch along the opposite bank as far as the Black Prince boatyard. As many as three boats abreast leave rather a narrow gap for passing boats.
- 10 At Stoke Bottom Lock, turn right over the bridge for Stoke Prior village, Navigation Inn and a bus back. Or retrace your steps up the amazing flight.

Canal: Worcester & Birmingham

Start: Tardebigge Wharf OS Grid ref: SO996693

Finish: Stoke Prior OS Grid ref: SO951670

Distance: 3½ miles

Approx Time: 1¾ hours

Food & Drink: Queen's Head canal side by bridge 49, Navigation Inn at Stoke Prior

Local tourist info: Worcestershire Tourist Information www.visitworcestershire.org

Parking: Roadside or car parks at Queen's Head & Navigation (if visiting pub)

Train: Nearest station: Aston Fields

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