



World Heritage heights

Llangollen Canal - Llangollen to Chirk

This walk forces everyone, no matter how many times they've been here before, to stand and stare, and it surely ranks in the very best walks of Britain.

Every canal has its own highlight, but the Llangollen Canal has the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct - one of the Seven Wonders of the Waterways. Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is only for adrenalin junkies. An inspirational feat of engineering that sends shivers to the vertiginous and the non-vertiginous. Believe it, or not, its 18 arches held together with ox blood and Welsh flannel have ridiculously kept the Llangollen Canal in flight above the River Dee for over 200 years.

The brave can tread the slim towpath that hugs the water, and gasp over sheer drops either side, but beware of pondering midway in case doubts set in. How can 127 feet of fresh air make narrowboats fly and a canal defy gravity?

A bit like the fisherman in the pub at the end of the day, it's hard not to rave about the 'Big One' but, as well as the marvel of the Aqueduct, the Llangollen Canal has plenty of other pleasures for the walker.

Llangollen to Chirk

Beyond the short elastic of the car park in the sightseers' zone, walkers can step into remote Wales by canal towpath.

It's as solitary as it should be, and you only have to share your space with sheep, herons, soaring kite and the occasional narrowboat. Come in July and the towpath is even serenaded by heavenly choruses blowing in the breeze from Llangollen's annual Eisteddfod. The whole of Llangollen is singing. It's the law of physics of course that make the sounds of music travel far over water, but then it's the spirit of the waterways that makes them even sweeter.

The equally romantic sound of horses clopping rhythmically down the towpath is another rare pleasure that can be enjoyed on the Llangollen Canal. Horseboating is a seriously exciting part of the living history of the canals, and there are only a handful of commercial operators keeping the traditional skills alive.

There's a lot to see and absorb on this canal, but try to fit in time to see Horseshoe Falls, a semi-circular weir created by Thomas Telford to provide water for the canal.

Then there's the marvel of Telford's Chirk Aqueduct, half in England and half in Wales. The aqueduct was built in the late 1700s and is 70ft high, with ten spans taking the canal over the river Ceiriog. Canal and railway enthusiasts can brush side by side as the unexpected drama of the aqueduct is the presence of a railway viaduct running alongside, 30ft higher than the canal.

Wildlife, water, heritage, boats, amazing engineering marvels and music. The Llangollen Canal has too much to take in on one day, so stay for the weekend, or come back again as soon as you can.





Highlight of the walk

Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is the longest and highest in the UK. Built by William Jessop and Thomas Telford, it is considered to be one of Telford's greatest engineering achievements. The aqueduct and 18km of canal were awarded World Heritage Site status in 2009.

Did you know?

Llangollen officially has the status of a 'Walkers are Welcome' town. One of the National Trails, the long-distance Offa's Dyke Path joins the Llangollen Canal towpath at bridge 27 just outside Chirk, then crosses Pontcysyllte Aqueduct before it heads back up into the surrounding hills.

www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk
www.nationaltrail.co.uk

Fascinating fact

Held every July for the past 60 years, Llangollen's International Music Eisteddfod is one of the world's greatest music festivals. With musicians and dancers from over 50 countries, there are daily music and dance competitions, and spectacular evening concerts.

www.international-eisteddfod.co.uk
www.llangollen.org.uk



Start:

Llangollen Wharf
OS Grid ref: SJ214422

Finish:

Chirk
OS Grid ref: SJ297370

Distance:

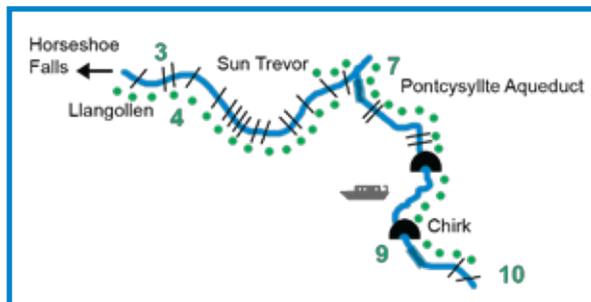
9 miles approx

Terrain:

Flat easy walking. Muddy in rural parts after rain.

OS Explorer Map

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The walk - step by step

1. At Llangollen Wharf, if you have time, follow the horse-drawn boats left along the canal towards its end near Horseshoe Falls. Otherwise turn right to follow the towpath out of town.
2. The canal is very narrow, often only wide enough for one boat but, once you're past the visitors' moorings, both canal and towpath widen as glorious views spread out in front of you.
3. Passing the lift bridge, the canal curves under bridge 42, then the trees clear and the view of the Dee valley below is breathtaking.
4. There are views of the valley and the ruins of Castell Dinas Bran on the hill behind you, and also a bird's-eye-view of boats slowly wending their way through this narrow passage.
5. Once you've dragged yourself away from the view, and past the Sun Trevor pub above bridge 41, the canal continues to wind its narrow way past trees,

sheep-filled fields and under pretty stone bridges, until you arrive at the edge of Trevor Basin.

6. Here cross a narrow footbridge over the canal, pass some houses then cross over the road to the gate to the Basin. Anglo Welsh's hireboat base and café/shop are on your left, and the magnificent Pontcysyllte Aqueduct awaits you to the right.
7. Cross the footbridge over the basin and turn right to walk over the Aqueduct - a vertiginous experience.
8. Past the swing bridge, there are views back across the valley to the Aqueduct. Follow the towpath until it meets the road at bridge 27 before heading south towards Chirk.
9. Chirk Marina is beyond Whitehouse Tunnel then, after a short wooded stretch, walk through Chirk Tunnel. You emerge to the view of Chirk Aqueduct with the railway viaduct alongside. Walk over the aqueduct then retrace your steps to the station.

Where to eat

Wharf Tea Room & Gift shop

Llangollen Wharf.
T:01978 860702
www.horsedrawnboats.co.uk

The Sun Trevor

Sun Bank. Overlooking the canal at bridge 41.
T:01978 860651 www.suntrevor.co.uk

Telford Inn

Trevor Basin. Canalside. T:01978 820469

Aqueduct Inn

Pontcysyllte. Above canal with views towards Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. T:01691 772481

The Hand Hotel

Chirk. Near the station, short walk from canal.
T:01691 773472 www.thehandhotelchirk.co.uk

The Bridge Inn

Chirk Bank. Overlooking Chirk Aqueduct.
T:01691 773213

Poachers Pocket

Chirk. Canalside near bridge 19.
T:01691 773250
www.poacherspocketpub.co.uk

Best picnic spot

Just beyond bridge 42 overlooking the Dee valley (or on the grass next to Pontcysyllte).

And more

Large choice of other pubs and cafés in Llangollen and Chirk.

Plas Newydd

Llangollen. The perfectly preserved Gothic-style home of the 'Ladies of Llangollen'.
T:01248 714795
www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Llangollen Motor Museum & canal exhibition

Pentrefelin. Canalside by bridge 48.
T:01978 860324
www.llangollenmotormuseum.co.uk

Where to stay

Canalside B&Bs

Borrows Rest 3-star
Trevor. Overlooks Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. T:01978 822933

Bryn Meirion 4-star
Llangollen. Canalside.
T:01978 861911
llangollenbedandbreakfast.co.uk

Glencoed 3-star
Pentre. Canalside near Aqueduct.
T:01691 778148
www.glencoed.co.uk

Ty Camlas 3-star
Near Llangollen Wharf. (2-bed apt) T:01978 861969
www.tycamlas.co.uk

Canalside campsites

Wern Isaf Campsite
Llangollen. ½-mile walk from the Wharf. T:01978 860632
www.wernisaf.co.uk

Lady Margaret's Park Caravan Club Site, Chirk. Short walk from Chirk Tunnel. T:01691 777200
www.caravanclub.co.uk

Canalside cottages

Dock House, Trevor Basin. Near Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.
T:0117 3041122
www.anglowelsh.co.uk

Canalside hotels

Chainbridge Hotel 3-star
Llangollen. Near Horseshoe Falls.
T:01978 860215
www.chainbridgehotel.com

Bryn Howel Hotel 3-star
Canalside near bridge 38.
T:01978 860331
www.brynhowel.com

The Hand Hotel
Chirk. Short walk from Chirk Tunnel. T:01691 773472
www.thehandhotelchirk.co.uk

And more

Choice of self-catering, B&Bs and hotels in and around Chirk & Llangollen. www.chirk.com & www.llangollen.org.uk



How to get there

Train info

Nearest train station is Chirk
National Rail Enquiries T:08457 484950

Bus info

Traveline Cymru T:0871 2002233

Parking

Roadside or public car parks

Local Tourist info

Llangollen Tourist Information Centre

T:01978 860828 www.llangollen.org.uk

Canal & River Trust/Glandwr Cymru

Use the Canal & River Trust website to find specific local information.

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

Llangollen Steam Railway

Runs from Llangollen for 7½ miles along the river Dee. T:01978 860979

www.llangollen-railway.co.uk

Chirk Castle

1½ miles from Chirk Tunnel.

T:01691 777701 www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Boats

Anglo Welsh Waterway Holidays

Trevor Basin. Holiday & day boat hire.

T:0117 3041122 www.anglowelsh.co.uk

Black Prince Narrowboat Holidays

Chirk Marina. Holiday boat hire.

T:01527 575115 www.black-prince.com

Crest Narrowboats

Chirk Marina. Holiday boat hire.

T:01691 774558 www.crestnarrowboats.co.uk

Horse-drawn boat trips

Llangollen Wharf.

T:01978 860702 www.horsedrawnboats.co.uk

Trips across Pontcysyllte Aqueduct:

'Thomas Telford'

From Llangollen Wharf.

T:01978 860702 www.horsedrawnboats.co.uk

'Eirlys', Jones the Boats

Trevor Basin. Charter trips also available.

T:01691 690322 www.canaltrip.co.uk