

Fascinating facts about canals and rivers

Discover fascinating facts about the UK canal and river network, from the longest canal tunnel to the shortest lock.



Bingley Five Rise locks wide shot

Canals and rivers

1. The **longest river** in the UK is the [River Severn](#), stretching 220 miles from Plynlimon in Wales to the Bristol Channel.
2. The **longest canal** in the UK is the [Grand Union Canal](#), stretching 137 miles from London to Birmingham. Cruising the whole length, non-stop, would take you 74 hours. The **longest canal in Britain built as a single waterway** is the [Leeds & Liverpool Canal](#) at 127 miles long.
3. The **shortest canal** in the UK is the **Wardle Lock Branch** of the [Trent & Mersey Canal](#). It consists of just one 72ft-long lock and a few yards of canal on either side.
4. The **oldest canal** in the UK is the [Fossdyke Navigation](#) which was built by the Romans.
5. The **newest canal** in the UK is the [Ribble Link](#) which opened in 2002.



Standedge Tunnel, Huddersfield Narrow Canal

Canal tunnels

1. The **longest canal tunnel** in the UK is [Standedge Tunnel](#) on the [Huddersfield Narrow Canal](#). It is more than three miles long.
2. The **deepest canal tunnel** in the UK is also [Standedge Tunnel](#) on the [Huddersfield Narrow Canal](#).

Lock flights

1. The **longest lock flight** in the UK is the **Tardebigge Flight** on the [Worcester & Birmingham Canal](#). The flight boasts 30 locks and raises the canal 220 feet.
2. The **deepest lock** in the UK is **Tuel Lane Lock** on [Rochdale Canal](#) at just under 19 feet.

Aqueducts

1. The **longest aqueduct** in the UK is the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct on the [Llangollen Canal](#). The aqueduct stretches over the River Dee Valley and is 1000 feet long.
2. The **first boat aqueduct** in the UK was built at Barton in 1761 to carry the Duke of Bridgewater's canal from Worsley to Manchester. It was replaced in 1893 by the Barton Swing Aqueduct.



Pontcysyllte Aqueduct

And finally...

1. Britain's longest river is the [River Severn](#) at 220 miles. In comparison, the **world's longest river** is the Nile, at 4,160 miles, closely followed by the 4,000-mile Amazon.
2. Most people know that Birmingham has more canals than Venice - but few know the exact figure. In fact, the [Birmingham Canal Navigations](#) extend to just over 100 miles, including two long tunnels, several aqueducts and even a waterway version of Spaghetti Junction.

3. In 1912, a **cow named Buttercup** fell into the [Leeds & Liverpool Canal](#) by the southern portal of the Foulridge Tunnel. Rather than wade out as usual, she **chose to swim the whole 1640 yards** to the northern end, where she was revived with brandy by drinkers in the nearby Hole in the Wall pub. Pictures in the pub commemorate the occasion.
4. Over 650km of fibre-optic cables are buried beneath our towpaths
5. In England and Wales there are **1,569 locks, 53 tunnels, 3112 bridges, 370 aqueducts** and **74 reservoirs**.



[Free guides for fun days out](#)