

What a beautiful day to go on a boat!

What a beautiful day to go on a boat! We arrived to a lovely welcome from the staff at Blackwater Meadow and after an informative tuition to our boat, Lazy Days, we set off. Our Engineer Matty stayed with us as we turned right out of the Marina and continued down the Ellesmere branch, where we could moor up and pop into Tesco to buy our picnic lunch.



Leaving the Ellesmere Arm and turning left in the direction of Hurleston, we pass the marina and navigate the few moored boats before the canal opens up and the only noise is the gentle hum of the engine and the birds singing. Just beautiful. We set up the front deck table, open up the snacks and relax.



Looking at the map supplied on the boat we see that Ellesmere Tunnel is not far ahead and the kids can't contain themselves! As it's only a short tunnel we can see the light at the end as we approach, shouting the all clear to the driver we continue. My daughter is amazed at the reflection of the roof on the water towards the end of the tunnel, creating the illusion that we are cruising through a cylinder...she's quickly distracted when water drips on her head and she retreats under the deck canopy.



As we emerge from the tunnel we cannot believe how pretty the reflections of the trees are on the canal water and how blessed we are to have chosen such a fantastic day, it's still march after all!





To our left we see Blake Mere, navigation runs along the lake, which is one of the smaller lakes in this area known as the 'mini Lake District'.

After about an hour's cruising I'm starting to feel a little bit brave and head to the tiller, my son has already had a little go so it can't be that hard can it? I totally over steer and then try to correct myself, failing I panic and then give up! My brother is left to sort out my mess and before we know it we're stuck on the shallow side on the canal – mortified I head back to the front of the boat. It takes a few good pushes with the pole to clear the bank and we're off again, I'm just relieved we didn't need to call for help and no others boaters witnessed our embarrassment!



We continue on through a winding peaceful stretch and it is hard to believe how quiet the canal is, during the summer months I'm sure there must be many more boaters but today it feels like we own the canal!

We have no plans to stop as we started our day a bit later than most but as we pass moorings just before Hampton Bank we agree it would have been a nice place to stop.

As we cruise down a wider part of canal at Whixall Moss I decide that I really can't go back into the Booking Office without having properly driven the boat, so back to the tiller I go. Maybe it's because we're on a straight stretch but this time I don't panic and I'm doing it! I move aside for the turn at Prees Branch but I'm excited to get back to the helm straight after and even navigate bends and a bridge without causing any damage. I am a boater!



We do a time check and realise that we're going to be cutting it fine getting back to the Marina for 4:30 so as we approach Ellesmere tunnel I give Jackie a call to tell her where we are, she says not to worry as we're not far away. We see Matty waiting for us as we near the Marina and he jumps on board to help us with the sharp turn in to the Marina.

As we drive through Ellesmere it is really tempting to stop and take a look around, it is stunning in the sunshine. The Boathouse restaurant alongside the Mere looks amazing but we have a long drive ahead so reluctantly we say goodbye. Blackwater we will be back and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is calling us!

