

# HOLIDAYS FROM FALKIRK

## THE SCOTTISH LOWLAND CANALS (THE FORTH & CLYDE AND THE UNION)



ALVECHURCH  
WATERWAY HOLIDAYS

The Forth & Clyde - being a sea to sea canal - is much wider than the average English canal. The Union Canal is a contour canal and has no locks at all nor bridges that have to be opened.

British Waterways (BW) staff currently operate all of the locks and bridges and boaters are not allowed to operate the locks themselves (though help is happily accepted). The hours for locks are 8.00am – 8.00pm and the Falkirk Wheel 9.00am – 6.00pm (7.00pm Saturdays). Between Falkirk and Glasgow there are 4 locks and 3 road bridges, with a further 18 locks and a number of pedestrian bridges between Glasgow and the Clyde at Bowling.

### INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE FALKIRK WHEEL

- It is 115 feet high (the equivalent of 8 double deck buses), 115 feet wide and 100 feet long.
- It can lift loads of 600 tonnes (300 at each end), which is roughly the weight of 100 adult elephants.
- Opened in 2003 after costing £17.5 million to build, it was part of a £84.5 million project to re-open the disused canals linking Glasgow and Edinburgh.
- It has been designed to last 120 years.
- It takes just ten 7kw geared motors to turn The Wheel which are so efficient, they use the same power as 8 toasters.

### NAVIGATIONAL INFORMATION

It is quite important to bring a mobile phone with you to cruise on the Scottish Lowland Canals, as British Waterways staff operate all of the locks and bridges and need to be aware of the traffic using the canals. Each of our boats has a 12-volt cigar-lighter style socket compatible with a standard in-car mobile phone charger.

Once you are ready to set off it will take you 20 minutes to get up into the wheel basin, or 35 minutes to travel west along the Forth & Clyde Canal to Bonnybridge road lift bridge

### Cruising West

If you are going west on the Forth and Clyde Canal, BW staff will see you through Bonnybridge road lift bridge and locks 17 to 20. You therefore need to contact British Waterways on 0845 676 6000 about a week before leaving home to let them know your plans. You are then on the summit reach with no more locks between here and Glasgow, but there are two more bridges.

At lock 20 let the BW staff know where you intend to stop for the night, what time you plan to leave the following morning and how far you intend to go that day.

If you plan to go into Glasgow (which is the place to stop for the night, even if you are going down to Bowling the following day), you need to take the left fork when the canal splits at Stockingfield Junction. Down the Glasgow branch you can either moor at BW headquarters at Applecross Street or if you are going to arrive before 5.00pm you can go down to Spiers Wharf and moor beside the flats on the left hand side. However, you need to have phoned 0845 676 6000 at least an hour in advance to get the Bascule Bridge opened for you at Applecross Street.

If you are going beyond Glasgow to Bowling you need to contact BW on 0845 676 6000 the day before you plan to make this passage.

### **Cruising East**

As before, you should book the Falkirk Wheel about a week before you leave home by calling British Waterways on 0845 676 6000.

Set off from our base 20 minutes before the time you have booked. We will open the pedestrian bridge for you and, once you have passed through this bridge, turn immediately into the lower lock, which should be set for you.

When the lock has filled and the gates have been opened, restart your engine. The BW staff will tell you when to proceed across and into the gondola of The Wheel.

Enter the gondola and someone at each the bow and stern should go onto the walkway and tie off the boat. Everyone should get back onto the boat whilst The Wheel turns, with your engine switched off. BW staff will tell you when to start your engine and leave the gondola.

Pass through the tunnel under the Antonine Wall. Once you leave the tunnel, turn to the left and into the first of two locks in series. The procedure is the same as for the lower lock. Once you have cleared these locks you have no more obstacles between you and Edinburgh, which is 10 hours cruising away.

Next you pass through the Falkirk Tunnel, after which the best place to stop for your first night is Linlithgow, three hours from the top locks. We recommend mooring at the pontoons, just beyond the bridge at Manse Road basin, where the Linlithgow Union Canal Society have their boats.

### **Subsequent movements through the Falkirk Wheel**

If you are coming from the west along the Forth & Clyde Canal, it is best to contact British Waterways (0845 676 6000) to book your passage through the Wheel. The latest point to do this is when you pass under Bonnybridge road bridge. Similarly, if you are coming from the east along the Union Canal, the latest you should phone is when you have cleared the Falkirk Tunnel and before the Seagull Trust boathouse.

### **Movement on the Forth & Clyde coming through The Wheel from the Union**

Advise British Waterways (0845 676 6000) the day before you want to start moving west on the Forth & Clyde Canal. Tell them the name of the boat, what time you will be at Bonnybridge road bridge (or where you will be setting off from the following morning and at what time) and how far you wish to go that day.

### **Telephone for the Falkirk Wheel and all locks and bridges on the Forth & Clyde Canal:**

British Waterways 0845 676 6000

### **Useful websites:**

[www.thefalkirkwheel.co.uk](http://www.thefalkirkwheel.co.uk)

[www.glasgowguide.co.uk](http://www.glasgowguide.co.uk)

[www.historic-scotland.net](http://www.historic-scotland.net)

[www.scottish.heartlands.org](http://www.scottish.heartlands.org) (tourist information)

[www.edinburgh.org.uk](http://www.edinburgh.org.uk)

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