



One Night Taster - Turner

DAY ONE – Tuesday

Lovely surprise from the children for our wedding anniversary. 'A voucher for an overnight stay on a canal boat'. Bit apprehensive as we hadn't done this before but always wanted to try it. What to pack? What food to take? rang the boatyard for advice. Change of clothes, warm coat and boots or trainers. As we were eating out at the Dog and Doublet for tea, just Breakfast and snacks, tea or coffee etc.

The day had come, we were picking the boat 'Ginette' up at 3.00 pm at Stone. Wow it was a working boatyard with dry docks. There is a large pub next door. Met by the friendly staff and shown to the boat and told to load up, she was lovely inside, warm and had everything we needed. Once we had settled in, we had the instructions on the boat and taken through our first two locks. Couldn't get over how easy it was 😊 The staff were brilliant, so patient with us. I was taught to drive the boat whilst him in doors, had the heavy work of doing the paddles/gates on the locks. Then we were on our own. I Soon got the hang of driving, sorry, steering the boat plus having also to remember to watch our speed – NO WASH – SLOW DOWN PASSED MOORED BOATS.

The scenery was interesting looking at all the beautiful gardens backing onto the canal. After 20 minutes and a couple of bridges later we arrived at our first lock. I got the boat into the side sort of ok! Whilst Ben jumped off with the rope to tie us up to the mushroom looking thing. He went off to the lock with the turn handle and started chatting to the lady who was coming up the lock. She was helpful reassuring Ben on which paddle to open/close and when. Got through the lock without incident. Passed Aston Marina and now heading toward the Sandon mooring for the night. You wouldn't know you were sandwiched between the busy towns of Stafford and Stone. Trent Valley is lovely. Took about an hour and a bit to arrive at Sandon moorings and the turning point. Over the fields was a lovely building with some pretty chimneys. Had a lovely meal at the Dog and Doublet after which we had a glass of vino on the front of the boat as the sun went down. Happy bunnies!

DAY TWO - Wednesday

We know it was about two and a half hours back to base so an earlyish start. Thought we'd have breakfast on the go, bacon and egg buttes. Started the engine, untied and surprise-surprise the knots held and we were able to undo them. Other boats had already started to move. With a bit of to-ing and frow-ing we turned the boat around in the turning point marked on the map (much easier than we thought).

Ben took over steering. Met a boat coming the other way just as we reached a bridge. Opps! Boats don't reverse very well, we ended up across the canal and had to use the barge pole. Didn't have time for a pit stop at Aston Maria so promised ourselves we'd call in on the way home. We were now going up the locks. Slightly different technique but just as easy as going down them. It really is just like using a bath except the boats are a little bigger. Arrived back at the base just about on time. The staff were there again to help us tie up. We unloaded the boat and said our goodbyes, with a brochure under our arm we set off home.

What a wonderful experience, going to do this again soon. 😊

