



Rutland Discovery Trails

1. Rutland Water Trail

Although Rutland is about 70 miles from the sea, it is home to a great deal of water, offering picturesque landscape scenes, lots of watersports and a great habitat for wildlife. Rutland Water boasts the title of Western Europe's largest man-made lake. It was created between 1970 and 1976 in order to supply water to the then expanding towns of Corby, Northampton and Peterborough but it has since become better known for its excellent recreational facilities which include sailing, fishing, birdwatching, walking, cycling and canoeing. Indeed, it is one of the finest trout fisheries in Britain and one of the Europe's leading winter wildfowl reserves.

Start: Leave Oakham on the A6003 towards Uppingham. In a short distance, just before the railway bridge, the road bends, coming close to the Water, you will drive over where the River Gwash flows into the reservoir. This small stream alone does not fill the reservoir which has water from the Welland and Nene rivers further south pumped into it. You may see birdwatchers here in spring/summer trying to catch a glimpse or the rare ospreys that breed around the water.



Turn left for Manton. Here the Horse & Jockey can provide you with refreshment. The village sits on a railway tunnel. Once you could catch the 'Robin Hood Express' from Nottingham which stopped only here for the aristocrats to board, then be at St. Pancras in no time. St Mary's church in Manton has many attractive features and its angled gravestones give the scene a crazy, eccentric appearance.

Just beyond the village is the *Lyndon Visitor Centre at Rutland Water Nature Reserve* which is open daily from mid-March to early September, and weekends only from early September to mid-March. The centre has fantastic views and hides offering the opportunity to see ospreys, there is also an excellent Nature Trail and an Interpretive Centre.

Follow the ridge top road to Edith Weston which is close to the southern shore of Rutland Water. There are fine views across to Burley-on-the-Hill and the Hambleton peninsula. Edith Weston is named after Queen Edith, Edward the Confessor's wife, who owned much of Rutland in the 11th century. In the church you will find a tablet marking the removal of remains from the crypt of Normanton church made necessary by the flooding of the reservoir.

Rutland Sailing Club (featuring a RYA sailing school) is located close to the village with a great deal of activity and a fantastic outlook of the water, sailing experiences are available from *Rutland 8 Yachts* and this base is also the home of *Rutland Sailability*, making the water accessible for all.



Proceed a mile further to *Normanton car park and picnic area*, where you can spend several hours watching sailing on the reservoir, walking along to Normanton Church or cycling. Bikes can be hired here throughout the year. *Normanton Church* was once the family church of the Ancasters who lived in Normanton Hall, now all that remains of this great estate is the grand stable block, converted into Normanton Park Hotel, and the top of the church which was saved by voluntary effort and now serves as a museum and is Rutland's most famous landmark (call TIC for opening times). A Normanton Church booklet explaining the history of the church and village formerly occupying the site can be purchased on-line and at Rutland Water Tourist Information Centre. Although on the foundations of a medieval church, the present building dates from 1826 and 1911. From the portico there are excellent views across the water. Refreshments can be bought at *Waters Edge café and Castaways restaurant*.

Leave Normanton taking a left for *Empingham, the other end of the dam*. If you wish, some passengers could be left to walk across the dam whilst the driver of your car proceeds round to *Sykes Lane car park and picnic area* on the northern shore. The distance across the dam is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile.

On the journey to Empingham by road, look left as you drop into the valley near the village where you can see the real height of the dam and how well it is landscaped.

Carry on to *Sykes Lane* to visit the *Tourist Information Centre* with its displays, leaflets and publications. Also at this site there is an children's adventure playground, a dog walking area and a refreshment kiosk.

Back on the A606, and on to Whitwell. Turn left at the village for the car park and picnic area. Whitwell is one of the largest sites with lots going on, there's *Rutland Water-sports* which has events, courses, activity days, plus a bit of retail therapy available, Rutland's premier *Outdoor Adventure Centre* offering exciting experiences on a high ropes adventure course, climbing wall and cycle hire. Whitwell is also the embarkation point for the *Rutland Belle*, a day cruiser on Rutland Water offering a fantastic excursion with commentary along the way. Refreshment is also available at this site.



A mile further along the shoreline is the *Barnsdale car park and picnic area* which, like the other three parks, has its own distinctive character. There is more woodland here, excellent for walks and brambling. The line of the old A606 can be seen disappearing into the water. One of the best times to be at both Whitwell and Barnsdale is sunset when there are glorious views towards the west.

Return to the A606 and turn left for *Oakham*. This road offers splendid views across the Rutland Water. On your right you may notice the majestic mansion on the hill at Burley, once home to the Duke of Buckingham and the Earls of Nottingham and now home to private luxury apartments.

On reaching the sign to *Hambleton*, turn left and proceed up the hill to the village. If you have time walk all round the peninsula which takes about two hours and gives a total view of the reservoir including the secondary drawoff tower, the limnological tower which monitors water quality, disappearing roads and the outline of Normanton Church. Alternatively you can go to the end of the peninsula where again there are some pleasant woodland paths.



As you return to the village you will pass Hambleton Hall Hotel, one of Britain's outstanding gourmet establishments with a Michelin Star and 4 AA rosettes. In the small village you will find the popular *Finch's Arms* with great food and fantastic view from their rear garden. There is also the 12th century church of St Andrew with the 16th century Priest's House next door.

As you return towards the A606 look for the sign to *Egleton* on your left and proceed to this small village which is home to the *Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre* (open daily throughout the year) with lots of hides around the reserve and a fantastic interactive centre which children love. Although only a mile from Oakham, Egleton retains a simple, serene atmosphere. The famous south doorway of St Edmond's church must be seen. Look for the inscription on the old school nearby which shows the link between the Finches of Burley and the village.



Useful Contact Information:

Note: purchasing a day's parking at an Anglian Water car park is valid for ALL Anglian Water car parks on the same day, there are toilets at all these car parks.

The Horse & Jockey, Manton: 01572 737335 www.horseandjockeyrutland.co.uk
Serving great food every day at this popular county inn full of charm and character.

Lyndon Nature Reserve: 01572 737378 www.anglianwater.co.uk
Open 7 days a week during summer, weekends only from October to March.

Rutland Sailing Club, Edith Weston: 01780 721999 www.rutlandsc.co.uk

Rutland 8 Yachts, Edith Weston: 07890 421282 www.rutland8yachts.co.uk

Rutland Sailability, Edith Weston: 07957 223 039 www.rutland-sailability.org

Tourist Information Centre, Sykes Lane: 01780 686800
Open daily 10am - 4pm March to October, 10am - 3pm November to February.

Normanton Church, Normanton: 01780 686800

Waters Edge café & Castaways restaurant, Normanton car park: 01780 686444

Rutland Watersports, Whitwell: 01780 460154

Rutland Cycling, Whitwell: 01780 460705 - Normanton: 01780 720888

The RockBlok, Whitwell: 01780 460060

Rutland Belle, Whitwell: 01572 787630. Cruises daily throughout summer.

Finch's Arms, Hambleton: 01572 756575. Great pub, great location, open every day.

Hambleton Hall, Hambleton: 01572 756991. Michelin Star, 4 AA rosettes, a real treat. Also 4* Country House Hotel www.hambletonhall.com

Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre, Egleton: 01572 770651 Find out all about the birds and wildlife found around the reservoir. www.anglianwater.co.uk

Rutland Fly Fishing Adventures: 01572 722422. Fun and friendly flyfishing on Rutland water - www.rutlandwaterflyfishing.co.uk