

tunnel is monitored here for air quality. CRT lead and trail canoes accompany groups and keep them together as well as giving a commentary at the lit adits on the construction of the tunnel, its methods, reasons and purposes.

The tunnel, which took 17 years to build, has a range of finishes, bare rock, stone blocks, original and more recent bricks, sometimes as jack arches, or with shotcrete. There are some short straws towards each end although nothing like the stalactite rapiers that Robin Witter and Jon Goodwin found in the original Harecastle Tunnel (May 1980, p21).

Most falling water can be avoided but there are a couple of heavy curtains right across the tunnel towards the Marsden end and so boaters remain dry for longer when northbound. The temperature in the tunnel is a fairly constant 8°C.

Passage takes about two hours, including stops for talks and to let stragglers catch up. At Marsden the canal centre includes a café and toilets while Diggle has a popup snack shop in a portable cabin and a portable toilet. Diggle has parking adjacent whereas it is a ten minute walk to where any parking is allowed at Marsden. A similar walk is required at each end to catch the connecting local bus. Walking the whole way is a fairly strenuous 8 to 11km over the hill. I have done it in the past, not portaging the kayak, passing a rifle range, getting lost and having to



Typical level of lighting at an adit stop.

Publicity is locally or on social media, bookings filling up overnight when dates are made public. CRT are short of cash because of slashing of Government grants so CRT should be seeking any way possible to increase revenue, of which this is a welcome example.

Price £110 per canoe, solo or tandem

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/news/paddle-under-the-pennines-for-the-first-time-and-help-keep-canals-alive>



**Unique
experience
Lighting
Support in
tunnel
Commentary
Food and
toilets**



**Booking
information
Return
logistics
Parking**



Arrival at Diggle.

climb over a fence to reach the road, an option not open to somebody leading a tow horse several years ago, who faced the same problem. On the day before our trip this time there was a fire on the hill, attended by seven fire engines.

Each canoe is fitted with a headlight and the series of arcs of light mean that much more can be seen than would be visible from a single narrowboat. The geology and range of construction techniques are fascinating and need to be seen firsthand.

The tunnel bends in places as those digging the tunnel attempted to meet each other, requiring some accurate surveying. There are some wider chambers to permit working boats to pass but there were inevitable confrontations in the long narrow sections, the tunnel consequently changing to letting boats through perhaps three at a time before the gates were locked, a young lad walking with the key to the other end, a return journey he made twice a day. These days the canoes are tied in a line and pushed into the tunnel with the gates locked overnight for safe keeping.

There is a significant level of interest in canal tunnels, not just because they are often safer than alternative portage routes. This one is exceptional. There is a long waiting list.



Locking the canoes away for the night.