

We have a plan! It involves Liverpool and a black bottom.

The two most frequently asked questions to anybody going off on a trip or adventure are: “What’s your plan?” and “Have you planned your route?”

Sometimes people genuinely want an answer, sometimes they do not. Some of them really do want all the details but I suspect the majority are just being polite. Either way the answer, in our case, is usually “we don’t have a

plan” and, or, “No, we don’t have a route”. In the case of the our cycle trip around the coast of Britain we didn’t need much of a plan other than; get up, eat, pack, cycle, camp, eat, sleep and repeat. As for a route, that was largely dictated by the boundary between the land and the sea. That’s just the way it is if you are cycling around an island. We have, up to now, adopted a similar attitude to the six month canal trip.

For ages now I have been giving the same, slightly facetious

answers to the same questions about it. I have even refused to put a definite start date on the trip, answering somewhat glibly that we will simply wake up one morning and decide to leave because it's a sunny day or we don't have any reason not to, or we have run out of cornflakes or something. Well for all those people that I have irritated with my non-committal answers I have some news: WE HAVE A PLAN!!

To everybody that has asked about our route the closest I have got to any kind of answer has been,

“we will be going vaguely south”. I can now reveal that we will be going west, and not vaguely, but purposefully. You see based on a whim, and what better premise is there for formulating a plan, we decided the other day to look into the possibility of going to Liverpool on the boat. I don't mean that we began researching whether or not there were canals that went to Liverpool, there are. The Leeds and Liverpool Canal kind of gives the game away in it's name. What I mean is that I had read that it is now possible to float your way right into the

heart of Liverpool docks courtesy of an assisted passage provided by the Canal and River Trust. All you have to do is book a return journey on specific dates and once there you can stay in the shadow of the Liver birds for up to a week free of charge. So that's what we plan to do. After that we will head east and then vaguely south.

I had heard that these assisted passages into and out of the great metropolis were very popular so we didn't think we stood much chance of finding one at such short

notice. However, to our considerable excitement, we discovered that there was one slot left available on the 4th May. We snapped it up pronto and then started to read a bit more about the journey. It seems we will be navigating several open dock basins (life jackets have been purchased), a couple of tunnels and possibly some rather big obstacles in the form of ships.



Room for a little un?

If it all goes to plan we will end up sailing majestically into Salthouse dock right in the heart of the city where we can stay for six days. Tourists can look forward to some hilarious entertainment as I try to manoeuvre onto to our allocated

pontoon without bashing into any visiting cruise liners. Pretty cool eh?



Look out Liverpool, we are coming for you.

So that's the glamorous start to

our journey sorted. Before that can happen our Golden Girl will have to endure the rather undignified procedure of being hauled out of the water by her prow to have her bottom blacked. That's happening on Thursday so we are de-camping to stay with family and friends for a few days. Apart from not being allowed to stay on the boat while she is out of the water I don't think she would want us watching such a process anyway.

So there it is. A real life plan with dates and everything. The next person that asks; "have you

got a plan?" had better have an hour or two to spare to listen to the answer.