

Neptune's Staircase

Staidhre Neptune

Pronounced: *Styra neptune*

How does the staircase work?
Ciamar a tha an staidhre ag obrachadh?

Step 1: The gates at one end are opened and the boat sails in.

Step 2: The gates are closed.

Step 4: The gates at the other end are opened, and the boat sails through them into the next lock chamber.

Step 3: The amount of water in the lock is either increased (if the boat is being raised) or reduced (if the boat is being lowered). This continues until the water reaches the same level as the water in the lock where the boat is going next.

Neptune's Staircase... facts and figures

The staircase allows boats to climb (or fall) 19.5 metres (64 feet) in the space of 457 metres (500 yards).

A series of locks is commonly known as a "flight".

There are eight locks in this flight.

It takes around 1.5 hours for a boat to go through Neptune's Staircase.

Twelve men used to be employed to open and close the locks using capstans turned by

Staidhre Neptune... fiosrachadh is figearan:

hand. However, the mechanisation of the locks in the 1960s reduced the minimum number of lock-keepers needed to just two. Building a flight of locks was much cheaper than building individual locks - it saved on building time and also reduced the total number of lock gates needed. Eight individual locks would have needed sixteen pairs of lock gates, whereas a flight of eight locks only needs nine pairs of gates.

Did you know...?

It was the men who built this flight of locks *staidhre ghlasan* in the early 1800s who gave it the name "Neptune's Staircase". Neptune was the Roman god of the sea. The Greeks called him Poseidon.