

PRESS RELEASE

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PLAN YOUR CANAL GETAWAY AND DISCOVER A WORLD OF WATERWAY WONDERS

Waterways and wellbeing charity Canal & River Trust is urging people to look ahead and plan a canal escape for when the coronavirus lockdown lifts: a responsible, safe and relaxing way to get away from it all without leaving the country.

The nation's holiday hire boats offer the chance to explore a wide range of locations across England & Wales, from countryside to former industrial centres, staying aboard a private narrowboat with just family and friends. Spanning over two hundred years of history, the waterways have now transformed into green corridors running through many towns and cities.

Canal and towpath use should be limited and local at the moment and, until they can be re-discovered first-hand, the Trust invites people to become armchair voyagers and prepare for the chance to experience the pleasures of the UK's waterways.

Richard Parry, chief executive at Canal & River Trust, said: "Research shows that simply being by the water makes people feel happier. As we begin to look ahead towards life after lockdown, what better way to see the countryside and soothe away the stress of the past few months than a trip to – or on – the waterways? Whether it's a hire boat holiday to explore tranquil miles of canal, a trip to one of the wonders of the waterways, or just a walk along your favourite towpath, they offer a perfect getaway while staying safe and avoiding international travel.

"The original 'Seven Wonders of the Waterways' list, compiled by the waterways restoration hero Robert Aickman over 60 years ago, offers a fascinating insight into our industrial heritage, and it's truly inspiring to see these spectacular feats of engineering still in active use today. This connection to the past grounds us all, while the slow pace of canal life lets us put aside the anxieties of everyday life, especially in such extraordinary times when we need it more than ever.

Canal & River Trust, Toll House, Delamere Terrace, London, W2 6ND

T: 0203 3204 4514 **E:** press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk **W:** www.canalrivertrust.org.uk **Twitter:** [@CanalRiverTrust](https://twitter.com/CanalRiverTrust)

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Richard continues: “Whilst we are all currently on coronavirus lockdown, it is important we all strictly apply government advice to stay at home. For now, use of towpaths should be limited and strictly local, respecting other people. especially those staying on moored boats. But, in a short time, we will be able to go out again and this is a perfect time to plan the next ‘big adventure’ along our unique, inspirational waterways.”

The Canal & River Trust looks after nearly 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England & Wales, running through the hearts of the nation’s towns and cities and meandering through the countryside. Packed with wildlife, history, astonishing feats of engineering, varied landscapes, a waterway getaway offers something for everyone. And there are many ways to explore them, from hire boat holidays and day boat hire, to daytrips to heritage sites, paddling along a coast-to-coast canoe trail, to towpath walking weekends.

Why not start by investigating the original seven wonders of the waterways? These triumphs of industrial age engineering are still spectacular today: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-history/history-features-and-articles/the-seven-wonders-of-the-waterways> (or see notes to editors).

Find ideas and inspiration on day visits and boating holidays visit: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

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For further media requests please contact:

Fran Read, national press officer

m 07796 610 427 **e** fran.read@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England & Wales. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to people’s lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day www.canalrivertrust.org.uk.

During the coronavirus lockdown, the Trust is urging people to follow government guidance to stay at home. If people have to venture out for essential journeys, please remember that use of local canal towpaths should be strictly limited, and people should keep their distance from others and moored boats. Canals play an important role in urban areas – providing vital green space – however towpaths should be strictly for local use only during the coronavirus pandemic. People must follow social distancing measures at all times.

Seven Wonders of the Waterways

1. Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, Llangollen Canal.

Thomas Telford and William Jessop's awe-inspiring aqueduct is a Scheduled Ancient Monument; a Grade I Listed structure; and in June 2009 became a World Heritage site. The aqueduct, taking the Llangollen Canal over the beautiful River Dee valley, is 1,000 feet long and 125 feet high. Find out more at our Trevor Basin Visitor Centre

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/pontcysyllte-aqueduct-world-heritage-site/trevor-basin-visitor-centre>

2. Standedge Tunnel, Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

The longest, deepest, and highest canal tunnel in the country, it's nearly three and a half miles long and took 16 years to build. At 196 metres (645 feet) above sea level, Standedge Tunnel burrows 194 metres (638 feet) underneath the Pennines. Find out more at our Standedge Tunnel Visitor Centre <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/standedge-tunnel-and-visitor-centre>

3. Caen Hill Lock Flight, Kennet & Avon Canal.

Arguably the longest and most impressive flight of 16 locks on the UK's waterways, Scheduled Ancient Monument Caen Hill was engineer John Rennie's solution to climbing the very steep hill in Devizes. The locks and ponds were the last stretch of the Kennet & Avon Canal to be built in 1810 and form part of a longer 29-lock flight at Devizes. There's more information about visiting Caen Hill Locks here <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/caen-hill-locks>

4. Barton Swing Aqueduct, Bridgewater Canal.

Originally this was the site of the first stone arch aqueduct over the River Irwell, built by James Brindley. However, when the river was canalised to make the Manchester Ship Canal, the aqueduct had to be rebuilt to allow for larger boats to pass underneath. This swinging aqueduct, unique on the waterways, was the solution. To find out more about local boat hire, go to <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/boat-trips-and-holidays>

5. Anderton Boat Lift, River Weaver/Trent & Mersey Canal.

The three-storey, iron Anderton Boat Lift is an incredible edifice. It was built by Edwin Clark in 1875 to lift cargo boats the 50 feet from the River Weaver to the Trent & Mersey Canal. Like all great things, the concept is simple: two huge water tanks, each with watertight sealable doors carry boats up and down. <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/anderton-boat-lift-visitor-centre>

6. Bingley Five Rise Locks, Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

An 18th century engineering masterpiece, these five locks operate as a 'staircase' flight – in which the lower gate of one lock forms the upper gate of the next. When completed in 1774, thousands gathered to watch the first boats make the 60-foot descent. Over 200 years later the flight is still in daily use. <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/bingley/experience-bingley>

7. Burnley Embankment, Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

Known principally for its industrial past, Burnley is surrounded by some of the most beautiful countryside in England and is also home to this mile-long stretch of embankment which carries the Leeds & Liverpool Canal through the centre of the town, up to 60 feet above the buildings below. <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/walking/canal-trails/burnley-trail/burnley-wharf>