

PRESS RELEASE

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CRUISE CONTROL: UK CANAL BOAT HOLIDAYS OFFER THE PERFECT POST-LOCKDOWN ESCAPE

As the Government announces that staycations will be allowed in England from 4 July, waterways and wellbeing charity Canal & River Trust and Drifters, a consortium of hire boat companies, are urging people to take a voyage of discovery around the nation's canals and rivers this summer.

UK-based hire boats offer a safe and relaxing staycation, with everything holiday-makers need to get away from it all.

Richard Parry, chief executive at Canal & River Trust, said: "Research shows that simply being by the water makes people feel happier. As lockdown measures ease and allow overnight stays away from home, what better way to see the countryside and soothe away the stress of the past few months than a cruise around the UK's waterways?"

"Hire boat holidays offer a perfect getaway while staying safe and avoiding international travel. Instead of a cruise round the Caribbean or the Med, now's the perfect time to get aboard your own boat and discover the magic of the nation's canals and rivers."

Nigel Stevens, Drifters director, says: "Canal boat holidays offer self-contained, self-catering holiday accommodation and the chance to explore the British countryside afloat. We are looking forward to welcoming holiday-makers back and have introduced new procedures to ensure social distancing at our boat yards, as well as extra cleaning.

"A licence isn't required to steer a canal boat and all our operators provide hirers with boat steering tuition as part of their holiday packages. For anyone thinking of taking a canal boat holiday for the first time, we can recommend the best routes."

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Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. Canal & River Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 7807276 and registered charity number 1146792, registered office address: First Floor North, Station House, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 1BB

To celebrate the return of narrowboat holidays to the waterways, the Trust has put together a selection of cruising rings that take in some of the best landscapes, heritage and culture that Britain has to offer:

- 1. The Droitwich Ring** (travels 21 miles, passes through 33 locks, takes around 16 hours):
This cruising ring is the only one in Europe which can be completed on a short break.
Highlights include: the historic Spa town of Droitwich; the Hanbury flight of locks; and the beautiful City of Worcester with its stunning cathedral.
- 2. The Stourport Ring** (travels 74 miles, passes through 118 locks, takes around 44 hours):
Highlights of this journey through the Worcestershire countryside and the heart of Birmingham include: the Wolverhampton 21 locks; Gas Street Basin in Birmingham; open countryside on the River Severn; Stourport Basins; Bratch Locks at Wombourne; and the pretty village of Kinver with National Trust rock houses.
- 3. The Warwickshire Ring** (travels 101 miles, passes through 94 locks, takes around 48 hours):
This waterway odyssey takes canal boat holidaymakers through the heart of England.
Highlights include the flight of 11 locks into Atherstone, Hawkesbury Junction where the Oxford Canal joins the Coventry Canal; the three locks at Hillmorton; the Knowle Flight of five locks; the pretty canal village of Braunston; Napton Junction; Newbold and Shrewley tunnels; the awesome Hatton Flight of 21 locks; Warwick with its incredible medieval castle; and Birmingham's Gas Street Basin.
- 4. Avon Ring** (travels 108 miles, passes through 130 locks, takes around 58 hours):
Highlights of this circuit which takes boaters through the Worcestershire and Warwickshire countryside include: Shakespeare's Stratford; the Lapworth flight of 25 locks; the Wilmcote flight of 11 locks; the River Avon and its panoramic views across Warwickshire and the Cotswolds; historic Evesham and Tewkesbury; Worcester and its magnificent cathedral; Telford's lofty Mythe Bridge; the tidal River Severn double river-lock at Diglis, the 30 lock Tardebigge Flight; and the 2,495-metre long West Hills Tunnel.
- 5. The Four Counties Ring** (travels 110 miles, passes through 94 locks, takes around 55 hours):
This epic journey through the counties of Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and the West Midlands takes boaters through: the World famous 2,670-metre long Harecastle Tunnel; extravagant cuttings and embankments on the Shropshire Union; Market Drayton home of gingerbread; views of the rolling Cheshire Plains; the Roman town of Middlewich; the waters at Tixall Wide on the Staffs & Worcs; and the flight of 15 locks at Audlem.
- 6. The Black Country Ring** (travels 125 miles, passes through 79 locks, takes around 60 hours):

Highlights of this tour of the Black Country include: Birmingham's Gas Street Basin; Roundhouses on the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal, the waters at Tixall Wide; Fradley Pool Nature Reserve at Fradley Junction; the 11 locks at Ashton; and 13 locks at Farmer's Bridge.

7. The Leicester Ring (travels 157 miles, passes through 102 locks, takes around 75 hours): This epic circuit takes canal boat holiday-makers through the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire countryside along rivers and canals, with highlights including: Saddington Tunnel on the Leicester Line; the Foxton Staircase of Locks; the pretty canal village of Stoke Bruerne; Blisworth Tunnel; Braunston canal village; the 11 locks at Atherstone; views of Coventry and its magnificent cathedral; and the 18th century canal village of Shardlow.

Find out more about canals and rivers across the UK at: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

For more information on Drifters and hire boat holidays visit: www.drifters.co.uk

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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.

For more information about cruising rings, go to <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/planning-your-boat-trip/cruising-rings>

Drifters Waterway Holidays is made up of nine hire boat companies: ABC Boat Hire, Anglo Welsh, Black Prince, Countrywide Cruisers, Foxhangers, Kate Boats, Napton Narrowboats, Shire Cruisers and Union Canal Carriers. Between them they offer over 550 boats for hire, operating from 45 bases across England, Scotland and Wales. 2020 hire prices start at £560 for a short break, £725 for a week on a boat for up to four people. Narrowboats range from 32ft to 70ft and can accommodate up to 12 people. All Drifters operators provide hirers with life jackets and boat steering tuition. www.drifters.co.uk Tel 0344 984 0322.