

PRESS RELEASE

16 July 2020

ACT QUICKLY IF YOU WANT TO ENJOY A HOLIDAY IN THE SLOW LANE THIS SUMMER

With the school holidays about to get underway, the Canal & River Trust, the charity that looks after 2,000 miles of waterways across England & Wales, is urging those looking to enjoy a holiday in the slow lane this summer to act quickly with bookings for canal boat holidays enjoying a huge resurgence as people look for the perfect family-friendly staycation.

Canal boat companies offering holidays are reporting very healthy bookings – with three of the largest, accounting for half the hire boats available to hire, saying that bookings are up 240% since government gave the go-ahead for holidays to resume from the end of June.

Richard Parry, chief executive of the Canal & River Trust, comments: “If you’re looking for a self-catering staycation this year, away from busy tourist areas, step aboard a canal boat. Canal boat holidays are a great opportunity to get back to what matters: spending time with family or friends, spotting wildlife and being as active as you like. Walking, cycling, fishing, canoeing and even paddle boarding are on offer. Our canals and rivers are open for you to explore. The many hire boat companies dotted around the country are waiting to welcome you. They’ve worked hard to make sure you can relax and enjoy your holiday with them this year while still following the latest government guidance.”

Nigel Stevens, from Drifters, a consortium of hire boat companies, comments: “A canal boat holiday is the fastest way to slow down. Families come together to operate locks and take turn to ‘captain’ the boat. We’ve bases right across the country and boats that provide home-from-home luxury. Anyone looking for a boat in the school holidays should get in quick, whilst those without school-age children can book now to secure their boat to benefit from canal cruising in the late summer sunshine in September and October.”

The data from Drifters, via the three largest hire boat operators on the UK canal network, which between them have around half the narrowboats available for hire, shows that since week commencing 21 June, when domestic holidays were given the go ahead to resume (23 June),

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bookings have almost doubled over the equivalent period in 2019 (1195 in 2019, 2356 in 2020). And during the two weeks after holidays were given the go ahead to resume (28 June to 11 July), bookings increased by 240% (600 in 2019, 1449 in 2020).

Nine reasons to take a boating holiday this year

Research shows that people can feel happier and healthier by the water, which makes a canal boat the ideal staycation choice.

1. It's the fastest way to slow down

With speed limits of 4mph and 2,000 miles of tranquil, calming canals to cruise along, your stress levels are reduced and a whole new, much steadier pace of life takes over.

2. Get a taste of freedom

The majority of Canal & River Trust waterways offer boating holiday-makers free moorings, so there's plenty of choice of where to stop for the night.

3. Use your muscles

Working locks, exploring local footpaths, cycling along the towpaths and standing at the tiller enjoying the fresh air are great ways to get your body moving and shake off your normal routine.

4. It's a greener way

A boating holiday is estimated to be some 20 times better for the planet than spending two hours flying for a holiday overseas. As soon as you swap your car for a boat, you'll be using a third of the fuel and emitting a sixth of the pollution.

5. Quality time together

Working as a team to crew your boat will bring you closer to the family or friends you're travelling with. Everyone can help, regardless of their age or ability, from acting as a look-out during mooring to making sure the skipper has a cup of tea.

6. A journey through history

Thousands of historic structures are spread throughout the canal and river system. The soaring majesty of Pontcysyllte Aqueduct has been recognised with World Heritage Site status, and the awe-inspiring three-mile long Standedge Tunnel cuts through the Pennines.

7. Surrounded by nature

Waterways provide homes for large numbers of birds, plants and animals, including many protected species, so there's always something special to spot

8. Lap up the luxury

Modern canal boats are fully equipped with all the essential mod cons: central heating, hot water, TVs, DVD players, showers and flushing toilets. Many boats now offer wifi too.

9. Try something new

It's easy to learn how to drive a boat and navigate the waterways. Your hire boat company will explain everything you need to know when you arrive, and they'll make sure you feel confident controlling the boat before you set off on your own.

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.