



Continuous Cruising

Your questions answered

Updated February 2019

There are around 34,000 licenced boats on our waterways. Over 5,500 of them are registered as continuous cruisers because they don't have a home mooring. If you're a Continuous cruiser, you need to move your boat regularly to stay within the terms and conditions of your licence. Otherwise, we may restrict or remove the licence that you're allowed to have.

Understandably, boaters ask us questions about what this means in real life. Here are the answers to the most frequently asked questions.

Why do we have rules about cruising?

We're trying to make things fair for all boaters by making sure everyone follows our [existing rules](#). The law and our licence conditions explicitly say that boaters without a [home mooring](#) – our continuous cruisers - must 'bona fide navigate'. The fact that some boaters choose not to do so is not fair on everyone else. As the navigation authority, we've a responsibility to manage the waterways fairly and safely for all boaters.

What do we mean by bona fide navigation?

To grant a boat licence for a boat without a home mooring, we must be satisfied that you will use it for 'bona fide navigation'. 'Bona fide' is Latin for 'with good faith' and is used by lawyers to mean 'sincerely' or 'genuinely.' We usually refer to 'bona fide navigating' as 'continuous cruising.' Our [terms and conditions](#) set out the legal requirements of continuous cruising. It's about showing us that:

- you are genuinely cruising a fair range of our network. Our team looks at the range of the furthest points your boat has visited over the year. If you're cruising only a small range, you may run into trouble when it comes to renewing your licence. What's important is that you're genuinely cruising, we would expect a range of 20 miles (32km) or more

- you're not staying longer than 14 days on regular (unsigned) stretches of the canal, or longer than what the short stay mooring signs tell you without our agreement. You may occasionally need to stay somewhere longer due to breakdown, illness or other emergencies but you do need to get agreement from your local [boat licence support officer](#) if this happens
- you need to be genuinely navigating around our waterways, not staying in a small area. For example - if you boat in a five-mile area for most of your licence and then went on one 60-mile trip over the course of two weeks, this wouldn't meet our requirements for bona fide navigation.

How far does my boat need to move?

This is one of the most asked questions and the answer is not as simple as anyone would like.

The British Waterways Act 1995 unhelpfully did not set a minimum distance or range. So, the Trust has had to spend a long time talking to boaters' groups, looking at previous Court Judgments and taking legal advice so we can come to a fair interpretation of this law, which is what appears in our terms and conditions.

We don't set a rigid pattern – that would be going against the relaxed spirit of cruising. Also, we understand that sometimes boats will turn around every so often if they reach the end of a canal, revisit a favourite spot once in a while, or go back to refuel etc.

As a continuous cruiser it is **very** unlikely that you would be able to satisfy the Trust's terms and conditions if your cruising range over a year is less than 20 miles (32km).

So how do you keep track of all the boats?

You may have seen [our team](#) out and about on the towpath noting down boat numbers. This helps us to monitor a boat's movement **over the course of a year** and when your continuous cruising licence comes up for renewal, it's this **movement pattern** we look at.

How do we review your cruising?

If it's your first ever cruising licence we look back at your boating over the first 10 months of your licence. If you've had more than one boat licence we look back at the first 10 months of your current licence and the last two months of your previous licence. We do this so we can write to you before it's time to renew your licence. We check your overall cruising range, your movement pattern and if you've been overstaying a lot.

What if there's a closed lock or bridge and we can't move?

Firstly, always use our notices to [plan your journeys](#) so you don't get stuck. Any planned stoppages are published as soon as possible to give you time to take an alternative route. If an emergency stoppage does happen, don't worry, we'll help you work out a plan. If you think you're going to be stuck in one place for longer than 14 days or worried that your 'movement pattern' might break the rules, then contact your local [boat licence support officer](#).

What if my boat breaks down or I'm taken ill and can't move?

Get in touch with your local [boat licence support officer](#) as soon as possible. They'll make a note of your situation and help you work out a plan. If you're only going to be stuck for a few extra days while your boat is fixed or you recover from your illness, then they can arrange for you to stay a little longer.

What if I or someone on my boat is expecting a baby?

Contact your [boat licence support officer](#) so we can agree, in advance, for you to stay longer in a place. This is usually one month extra either side of the birth. Even if baby decides to come a little earlier or later than planned! We can also arrange further adjustments up to 26 weeks after the birth.

What if I need to stay somewhere longer?

Perhaps you've found some work, or your children need to go to a particular school. If you need to regularly stay in one place, or a limited area, then consider a home mooring. Continuously cruising boating families do exist – the lifestyle can be both challenging and rewarding. Talk to us if you need help balancing your lifestyle needs with the licence requirements.

I have a disability, it's difficult to follow the continuous cruiser rules, what do I do?

As a [disabled boater](#) you are entitled to 'reasonable adjustments'. Each adjustment depends on your circumstances but, for example you may be able to:

- Reduce your cruising range or movement pattern along a particular stretch of waterway
- Get permission to moor longer than the stated stay time limits or in a specific location
- Get help with navigating, operating locks or help with getting on and off your boat

What is regarded as a 'reasonable adjustment' will be different depending on your own circumstances and whether the Trust is reasonably able to provide the adjustment. Here's what you need to do:

1. Talk to your [boat licence support officer](#) about your situation
2. Read our [disabled boaters frequently asked questions](#) and if you think you are eligible for an adjustment...
3. Fill in our [equality questionnaire](#) – you will need to share evidence about how your disability affects you and why it means you can't follow our continuous cruiser rules

What about vulnerable boaters?

If you're a boater in need of help, or you're concerned about a boater who you think might be vulnerable, contact your [licence support officer](#) directly or call 0303 040 4040. See our [list of organisations](#) who can help you with everything from debt to depression on our vulnerable boaters information page. We've a dedicated welfare officer who supports colleagues who work with vulnerable boaters.

You can also contact the [waterways chaplains](#) who offer independent support and advice. If you are concerned that someone may be an immediate danger to themselves or someone else call the emergency services.

What about people who have got used to a certain way of life?

It's important everyone gets to use all the waterways fairly and that the rules are applied consistently, so we can't have one rule for some boaters and another rule for the rest.

If you think that the way you like to cruise may not meet our terms and conditions, please contact your local [boat licence support officer](#). They'll talk to you about your particular circumstances and work with you, and offer you advice so that you can live your life while still meeting the rules.

Sometimes that's about making cruising adjustments. Sometimes that's looking at how a home mooring may be a better solution. Again, everyone is different so please talk to your local [boat licence support officer](#) before you get into problems.

Where can I find more information?

You can find more about how we make sure all continuous cruisers keep to the rules on our [how we monitor boat movement](#) page.

I'm worried about what this means for me: who can I talk to?

No matter what your worry or question might be, please talk to your local [boat licence support officer](#) first. They're here to help you enjoy the waterways on your boat while keeping to the rules of the road - or river - or canal!

Web links:

Boat Licence Customer Support Team:

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/officemap

Continuous Cruiser Monitoring Process

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/ccmonitoring