



Bruce Boats
Kennet & Avon Canal Trust

Member of the
Accessible Waterways
Association



Accessible Holiday Hire

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the boats like?

We have four widebeam canal boats specially built to accommodate those with limited mobility. All have ramps and lifts to access all areas, including the front and back decks, and accessible toilets and showers with grab rails. The saloon is spacious to allow for at least two wheelchairs with an open plan kitchen area.

How many people can come?

Hannah sleeps 12, Diana sleeps 10, Rebecca sleeps 8, Rachel sleeps 6. The boat layouts are on the website. Some are fixed bunks, some are wide beds that fold out from the seating in the saloon, and Rebecca has an electrically-operated hospital bed.

What do they cost?

For a week's hire, Rachel costs £1200 and the larger boats £1600. We will need to add 20% VAT unless you can sign the VAT-exemption form which certifies that there is a person in your group with a disability or chronic illness. We may be able to offer shorter holidays - please contact us for availability. Unfortunately we are not able to offer weekend breaks (Friday evening to Sunday evening).

What time should we arrive?

Please arrive at the wharf between 11.30 and 12.30 on your first day. Hires normally begin on Fridays (Rachel and Diana) or Saturdays (Hannah and Rebecca). One of our volunteers will meet you, show you round the boat, and accompany you for a little way on your journey until you feel confident managing the boat and the locks.

What time does our hire end?

You must vacate the boat by 9am on your last day, to enable our volunteer cleaning team to get the boat ready for the next group. This means you need return to Bedwyn the evening before.

Where can we leave our car?

We have ample car parking at the wharf. You are welcome to leave here, at your own risk. The gate is locked overnight.

Where can we go?

There are maps on board the boat and details of approximate timings - remember the speed limit on the canal is 4mph, but when there are moored boats you must stay at your slowest speed ("on tickover") which will be about 2mph. They say that the canal is "the fastest place to slow down"! Here is a brief overview of what is in store for you:

Go west...

A journey westwards takes you up four locks to Crofton Pumping Station. There is nice mooring here - it is a good place for the first night, and the pumping station is worth a visit especially on steaming days. After that there are six locks in quick succession to the summit level of the canal and a 500m tunnel. Four locks begin the descent to a 16-mile lock-free stretch through remote countryside. The first town on this route is Devizes, with the famous Caen Hill lock flight of 29 locks in just over two miles. Another day's journey takes you to the beautiful town of Bradford-on-Avon.

or go east...

There are good moorings at Froxfield for the first night, after four or five locks and 2-3 hours travelling. The locks (and the occasional swing bridge) continue at fairly regular intervals all the way to Reading, through delightful towns and villages: Hungerford, Kintbury, Newbury... after Newbury the canal has some river sections so watch out for the current and always moor the upstream end of the boat first!

What should we bring?

Unfortunately we are unable to provide bedding - you will need to bring sleeping bags / duvets and pillows, linen, towels. We recommend packing in squashy bags rather than hard suitcases as they are easier to store when empty. Bring a range of clothing and sensible shoes for outdoor use, as well as good waterproofs and sun hat / sun cream so you are prepared for all weathers. Temperatures on the boat overnight range from hot if it has been sunny during the day, to quite cool. Sometimes in the same night!

Is there heating on board?

Yes, all the boats have central heating which can be set to come on for 2 hours at a time

Can we charge phones / medical equipment?

Phones can be charged via the USB sockets or your own charger in standard 3-pin sockets. The boats have inverters which can power medical equipment if required.

Will I get a phone signal / is there wifi?

Phone signals vary along the canal, depending on your network. Most places are now OK. There is no wifi on board, likewise no TV - we would encourage you to make the most of going offline for a bit and enjoy the wildlife and your surroundings.

What are the kitchen facilities like?

Each boat has a normal gas cooker with oven, grill and hobs, an under-the-counter fridge with small freezer compartment, a tap for drinking water, and hot and cold water for washing up. There will be ample pans, cutlery and crockery for everyone on board.

What about water?

Each boat has a large water tank which will last between one and three days depending on the number of people on board. We recommend that you fill this every day to ensure you don't run out. There is a water tank level gauge so you can monitor your usage. There is a tap with a filter for drinking water.

What about toilets?

There are two flush toilets on each boat. With careful use, the tanks should last for a whole week. Should you need a pump-out, there are marinas and pump-out stations along the canal which cost about £20. Please only put the essentials down the toilet - no wet wipes, sanitary towels, etc, and stick to 2-ply toilet paper to avoid blockages.

What about fuel?

Your boat will have a full tank of diesel which will be more than enough for your week's holiday. Cooking is on gas, and there will be two gas bottles on board. All fuel is included in the price of your holiday.

Extra charges

At Bruce boats we don't believe in hidden charges, but if you lose or damage anything we ask you to pay for a replacement. A replacement windlass (lock key) costs £25 - it is worth checking after every lock that you still have the right number on board!