



SAFETY INFORMATION FOR PASSENGERS AND GROUP ORGANISERS

Waterways Experiences is dedicated to making canal boating accessible for all. For group leaders with any concerns for the safety of their party, this short note is to help you with any formal risk assessment that you need to undertake – and to reassure you. We have undertaken our own risk assessment template which is available on request from our Bookings team (Weekdays 9am -5pm. 01923 723819 Option1). If you have any questions, do not hesitate to arrange an advance visit to view the boats and discuss any aspect of your planned trip – we are open on Wednesdays (10am - 3pm) and at other times by appointment via the Bookings team.

These notes do not replace or in any way, alter our [Terms and Conditions](#) which apply to the trip.

The skipper will give you important safety advice when welcoming you aboard, but **while preparing for your outing we ask that you also note the following - and share the messages with everyone in your group.:**

1. **Footwear:** please ensure that any member of your party likely to want to get off the boat during the trip wears appropriate shoes. When leaning against lock gates to open them, there is often gravel which can be slippery, so rubber soled shoes please - trainers or similar - not fashion shoes with slippery soles.
2. **Arrival at the boat base:**
 1. We have ample parking space for cars and minibuses (including spaces for disabled nearest the visitor centre) and a drop-off area for moderate sized coaches. Coach parking is available close by, subject to prior notification.
 2. There is an accessible bathroom within our visitor centre, on the same level as the car park and we encourage passengers to make use of this before boarding (this reduces demand on the on-board facilities - these are very adequate but consume significant fresh water and generate waste that we have to pump out.)
 3. The boats are reached via a 50m concrete sloping path, which was designed with wheelchairs in mind. It involves several turns but turning space is adequate for large wheelchairs
3. **Boarding the boat:** all our vessels have ramps creating a smooth walkway onto the front or back deck of the boat. From the deck, there is a turn and steps down into the cabin. A simple electrically raised/lowered platform accommodates wheelchairs and those not able or wishing to use the steps, means that we can accommodate any size of wheelchair.
4. **Mobility of passengers:** In the event of an emergency when it might be necessary to evacuate the boat quickly, it's important that there are sufficient carers able to assist. With that in mind, we recommend a ratio of at least one carer for every person with a serious mobility issue. No more than 6 wheelchairs are permitted on Sheldrake 3, and no more than 4 wheelchairs on Close Shave and Sheldrake 2. If your party brings more wheelchairs than those permitted above, only the permitted number will be boarded; chairs not needed on the trip can be stored safely at the base. We encourage you to visit the boat in advance to assess its suitability for multiple chairs of the type your group members use, taking account also of the unlikely event of needing to evacuate the boat in an emergency.

5. **Cabin and outside seating/standing areas:** Passengers are encouraged to move about the boat. The boat is generally very stable, but there will be some turbulence in locks and there is a small risk of bumps in and approaching the locks and occasionally when passing other boats and mooring up. In this context, be aware of the risk of spilling drinks - especially hot ones.
6. **Stay SAFE** The crew always pay close attention to make sure that passengers get on and off the boat safely, but they cannot monitor people's movements at the lockside. So be sensible and never run as it's too easy to trip. Most accidents that happen while boating are in fact slips, trips and falls rather than falling in the water.
7. **Children and vulnerable members of your group:** Canals and locks can and do present a danger, particularly to children and vulnerable people. Their safety is your responsibility, whether on or off the boat, so do ensure that adequate supervision ratios are maintained throughout the trip. Our crews will supervise but cannot watch every individual all the time. We are particularly mindful of the risks of children crossing the lock via the gates. You must tell the skipper or crew member if you are prepared to allow those in your care to do this, and if you do, you should arrange adequate supervision on both sides of the lock.
Please ask the crew for buoyancy aids for any passengers you feel might be at risk of falling into the water.

Revised June 2020, April 2024 & February 2025.