EUROPE'S NO.1 BOATING HOLIDAY COMPANY

le boat®

Captain's Handbook

All you need to know to plan and enjoy your holiday on the water









Welcome Aboard!

Thank you for booking a Le Boat holiday! We're sure you'll have a great time. This handbook tells you everything you need to know for an enjoyable and safe boating holiday.

Le Boat is the biggest operator of self-drive leisure cruisers on the inland waterways of Europe and we have been helping thousands of people enjoy the pleasures of boating for many years.

All our boats are simple to operate and are suitable for seasoned 'sailors' and first-timers alike, so no previous experience is required. Everyone has a full briefing and a hands-on boat handling demonstration before setting off. That way you can be confident about how the boat works, how to handle her and the basic navigation rules of the waterways.

Please take the time to familiarise yourself with the information in this handbook before your cruise. Don't forget that lots of great pre-holiday information can also be found on our website. If you have any queries or questions just ask one of our team – they will be more than happy to help.

Have a great boating holiday!



Contents

Preparing for your holiday

- What's onboard 4
- What should I bring 5

Essential extras 6

Optional extras 7

Travelling to the base 10

Arrival at the base 11

At the end of your cruise 13

Your boat 14

Operating your boat 19

Boat handling 23

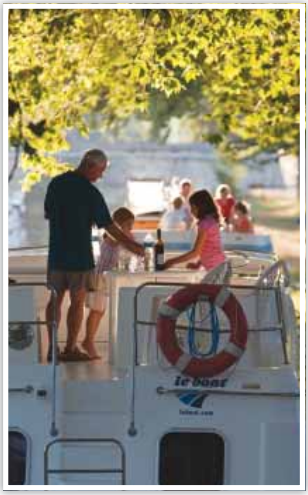
Waterway structures 33

Sharing the waterways 38

Base information 39

Signals 40





Preparing for your holiday







What's on board?

Everything you need for a comfortable and safe holiday is on board.

Cabins have all bed linen (pillows, duvets and sheets) provided for the number of people on board, and cabins will be made up in advance as singles or doubles (where feasible) according to your preferences. Small bathroom towels for each person are also provided.

The kitchen galley is fully equipped with a range of utensils, cutlery, crockery and equipment to suit the number of people on board. Tea towels are also provided. The kitchen galley has a gas oven and hob and depending on the model, either one or two fridges and a microwave oven.

Some of our boats are fitted with safes. Use them when going ashore and make sure you never leave valuables in sight of people passing by.

All safety equipment is on board such as a life-ring, life-jackets for each person (children's life jackets are available) and a basic first aid kit, as well as a boat hook, fenders and a fire extinguisher.

Deck equipment is provided so you can keep the outside of the boat clean and tidy while you cruise – you'll find a bucket and a mop as well as a mallet and mooring pegs and ropes.

Depending on the model of your boat, an outdoor table and chairs for use on the sundeck will also be on board. Parasols are provided on your boat for a refundable deposit.

What should I bring?



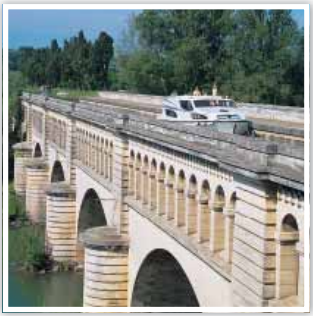
Don’t forget that boats have very limited storage space, so we recommend you pack your belongings in soft bags that can be easily stowed away. Bring comfortable clothes that allow you to move about the boat easily and deck shoes or rubber soled shoes will prevent you from slipping and won’t damage the decks. Don’t forget sun glasses, sun cream and a hat - as the sun reflects off the white surfaces of the boat.

Leather gloves (such as gardening gloves) are useful for protecting your hands while holding ropes in the locks.

Binoculars are great for bird-watching from your sundeck and a torch is useful for the evenings, especially if you head out to a restaurant and need to find your way back to your boat.

Finally, large beach towels are a good idea for sunbathing up on deck and small pegs are useful for clipping any wet garments to the railings for them to dry in the sun.









Essential Extras

These can be paid for prior to departure or at the base on arrival. Prices can be found in our latest brochure or from our sales teams and agents.

Collision Damage Waiver (CDW)

We encourage all customers to take great care not to damage their boat, or that of anyone else, while on holiday. All customers must pay either a non-refundable Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) or a refundable Damage Deposit. With the CDW you will be fully covered if your boat is returned damaged, or if there is any accidental damage or injury to third parties except if this has been caused by negligence or wilful loss or damage.

The refundable Damage Deposit will be used if your boat is returned damaged or if there has been any accidental damage or injury to third parties.

In all cases, the replacement cost of any items of boat equipment or inventory, such as bicycles, tables, chairs, parasols etc, that are lost or damaged will be charged for separately.

Please refer to our terms and conditions in our latest brochure or on our website for further details.

Fuel and Fuel Deposit

Your boat will be supplied with a full tank of diesel before you set off on your cruise and you will not normally need to refuel en-route. Fuel is an additional cost which you pay locally in local currency.

On arrival, you will be asked to pay a fuel deposit towards the cost of your fuel. At the end of your holiday, depending on your fuel consumption, you will either be given a refund or you will be asked to pay any additional fuel costs. Depending on your cruising region fuel charges are calculated on either a ‘per hour’ basis – in which case you will be informed how much the hourly fuel rate is, or a ‘per litre’ basis – in which case you will be told what the cost per litre is.

The sales teams will be happy to advise an approximate fuel cost according to your boat type and the approximate number of cruising hours your chosen route will take.

However, additional fuel will be consumed when using the boat’s heaters, gas oven and hob, and also if you cruise at a higher-than-recommended speed. Please note that fuel is charged according to market rates and is subject to change.

Optional Holiday Extras

We have a range of great holiday extras which you can pre-book to make sure your holiday flows smoothly. Latest prices can be found on our website or from our sales teams and agents.



Bikes

For collecting your morning baguette to exploring more of your cruising area - the vast majority of our customers find bikes to be very useful to take on board with them. Choose from either cross-country bikes or lighter standard bikes. Children's bikes and child seats are also available for hire – but don't forget to bring your own helmets.



Pre-order your groceries

Take advantage of our online grocery ordering service which allows you to order a selection of basic provisions for your first few nights on board. This is especially useful if you are not driving to your base, or know you will be arriving after the supermarkets have closed. Simply download the order form from our website, send it to the base and they will do your shopping for you! The cost of your groceries is payable locally in local currency when you arrive.

Unfortunately this service is not available at all our bases – please check with the sales team or our website for further details.



Parking

All our bases have open-air parking either on site or close by. Some bases have secure/locked parking and/or garages on site or nearby which can be pre-booked. Our sales teams and agents will be happy to advise you on parking options and costs for each base. Please note parking is at your own risk and Le Boat accepts no responsibility if your car is damaged or broken into.







Car transfers (for one-way cruises)

If you have chosen a one-way cruise, in certain regions you will be able to arrange for your vehicle to be transferred to your end-base, or your crew transferred back to your start base by taxi. In the event of a vehicle transfer, our drivers are covered by Le Boat's own insurance policy to do this. You will need to have your relevant car insurance papers with you when you hand over your car. Please note that we are not able to offer a car transfer service in all our cruising regions. Under the terms of our insurance policy we are also not able to transfer the following types of vehicles: trucks; vans; camping cars; motor homes; motor bikes; cars with trailers and buses. Please check with the sales team or our agents for further information.

Priority boarding & Late check-out

Why not make the most of your time on the water and register for our Priority Boarding and Late Check-Out service, which enables you to collect and return your boat earlier/later than our standard times. (Normally our boats are available from 16:00hrs and need to be returned by 09:00 at the end of your holiday). Please contact our sales teams/ agents for further information or check out our website.

Cleaning service

After a relaxing holiday you probably don't want to spend your last evening cleaning the boat, so why not pre-book our cleaning service and let us take care of this for you. Ask our sales teams or agents for more details when you book.

Special Occasion Gift baskets

If you are celebrating a special birthday or anniversary, why not pre-order one of our beautifully presented Special Occasion Gift Baskets. Full of local delicacies and regional specialities, this is a great way to mark a special occasion.

Angling dinghy (Ireland)

A must-have for anglers to reach those secluded areas of the lakes! Outboard motors are also available. Please note these dinghies are only available in Ireland.

Parasols

Parasols are provided on board your boat for a refundable deposit. You can also choose to buy or hire additional parasols if you wish.



BBQs

Charcoal BBQs or camp fires are not allowed along the waterways due to the risk of fire. However, you can hire one of our gas BBQs which are attached to the railings of your boat so you can enjoy alfresco meals with friends and family as much as you want. You can also hire halogen lanterns for extra light in the evenings.



Navigation guides & maps

It's great fun plotting out your cruise in advance and a detailed map and tourist information about your cruising region are essential for this. Our sales teams stock small supplies of maps and guides for most areas, and you can also purchase them direct from good book shops and via the internet.



Eco-pack

Help us preserve the waterways for future enjoyment by buying our eco-friendly pack of cleaning products and toiletries.



Travelling to the base



Arriving by car

The address, contact details, GPS coordinates and directions to all our bases can be found on our website and are also included at the back of this handbook.

All our bases offer open-air parking on site or nearby. Some bases have secure (locked) open-air parking or garages. Spaces may be limited, so pre-booking is advisable. Our sales teams and agents will be happy to advise on parking options and costs for each base.



Arriving by plane/train

You can arrange for a taxi to collect you from a train station or airport. Simply complete the form on our website and send it to the Base. The receptionist will make all the necessary arrangements and confirm these details to you, either directly or via one of our sales team or agents. Where possible we prefer to email confirmation to you, so please provide your email address if you have one.

The taxi driver will arrange to meet you in a dedicated place and will have a Le Boat sign. If you have pre-booked a taxi collection, please do not use any other taxi service as you will still be charged for the booked taxi transfer. The approximate cost of your taxi transfer will be advised by the base receptionist. This is payable directly to the taxi driver, in local currency.

Arrival at the base

Checking-in

You can expect a warm welcome from our friendly base teams - most of whom speak several languages – when you arrive. The receptionist will complete any outstanding paperwork and if you haven't already done so, help you choose which itinerary would best suit you and your party.

Our opening hours vary from base to base – please check the website for details or speak to our sales teams or agents.

Your boat will be ready for collection from 16:00 onwards unless you have pre-booked Priority Boarding.

Late arrival

None of our bases are open after 18:00hrs, so if you are going to be arriving at the base late, you will need to inform the base directly or the sales office where you booked.

When you arrive at the base there will be a note on the reception door informing you where your boat is. The boat will be left open with the lights on for you to stay on board that night. The base staff will do the full briefing the following morning. Please note you are not allowed to leave our harbour without first completing all the relevant paperwork and having a boat briefing. Cruising after dark is also prohibited.









Boat handling demonstration

Once you have completed all the relevant paperwork at reception you will be shown to your boat. You will be shown how everything on your boat works from the heating and hot water to the gas oven and kitchen appliances. You will also be given a boat handling demonstration so that you and your crew are able to take the boat out on the water and practice steering and manoeuvring under the guidance and supervision of one of our team. Detailed information on boat handling can be found from page 19.

Technical assistance

In the unlikely event of your having a technical problem that prevents the usage of your boat, you can contact your departure base 7 days a week during office opening hours. When calling, you must give your name, the name of your boat, the nature of your problem, your exact location and your mobile telephone number. A mechanic will come to your assistance as soon as possible. If it is outside office hours you should leave a message on the answer phone and a member of the team will contact you as soon as possible in the morning. Technical assistance is free except if the incident is a result of your negligence and in these cases additional charges will be made.

Emergencies

The numbers to call in the event of a medical or technical emergency are included with the boat's papers. To contact the local rescue services, no matter which country you may be in, you can dial 112 from your mobile phone.

At the end of your cruise

Return to the base

On the last day of your cruise, you must hand the boat back by 09:00 unless you have pre-booked a late check-out.

If you wish to leave the boat early in the morning, you should come to the reception office the previous evening before 17:00 so that we can complete the necessary formalities and finalise fuel payments and refunds.

Abandonment fee

We would remind you that under the conditions of hire, we reserve the right to recover any expenses which result from the late return or non-return of the boat. An abandonment fee will be charged for any boat not returned to the agreed place or at the agreed time.

Cleaning fees

The boat must be given back in a clean state. Please bag up all rubbish, remove items for recycling, mop the floor and wash and put away the dishes. If this has not been done, we reserve the right to charge you a cleaning fee. If you opted to pay a boat cleaning fee in advance then we will take care of the final cleaning for you. All you need do in this instance is wash and store all kitchen utensils and crockery.



Your Boat



Every boat has a boat-specific user manual on board. This gives very clear explanations about all the main features of your boat and how they work. It is written in English, French, German and Italian. You will be shown this manual when you arrive and a member of the team will go through it with you in detail.

The details below are given to help you familiarise yourself with what you will need to know about living on a boat.

Water

The water tanks have a capacity of between 500 and 1000 litres. This is sufficient for two to three days depending on the number of people on board and your water usage rate. We recommend you fill up the tank at every opportunity (water points are indicated in most cruising guides and are generally found in towns, marinas or canal sides where there are shore power facilities).

> Be careful not to fill the fuel tank with water by mistake.



The water filler cap, which is round and blue, is situated on the deck on one side of your boat. You will find a water key on board to open the filler cap, as well as a 20 metre water hose. In some boat harbours you will be charged for drinking water.

An electrical pump distributes the water to the different taps. Once it is switched on, your pump will start up automatically every time you turn on a tap, and stop when you turn it off. If your tank empties, switch the pump off otherwise it will continue to run and the impeller will be damaged. Also switch it off overnight and when you leave the boat.

Hot water

Hot water is produced by a heat exchanger which is part of the engine cooling system. The engine needs to run for about 1 hour to heat the water. It will remain hot for up to 8 hours after you stop the engine.

The shower

As you take your shower, waste water collects in a tray underneath the duck boards. Most do not empty themselves automatically and you will need to press the pump switch on the wall of the shower compartment after you have finished your shower. The capacity of the water tanks on your boat is limited. Make sure you use as little water as possible each time you turn on the taps or take a shower.

Toilets

Our boats are equipped with three different types of marine toilets which operate as follows:

- Flap type WC. Simply depress the foot pedal to open the flap in the bowl and operate the hand pump to flush as necessary.
- Hand pump marine toilet. Switch the small handle at the top of the pump towards the right and pump until the water is clean, then switch it to the left and pump again to empty.
- Electric saniflow toilets. Push the button several times.

To avoid any problems with marine toilets, you should ask all your crew members to respect the following basic rules:

- put nothing into the bowl that could block the system.
- use as little toilet paper as possible.
- use plenty of water when flushing.

If the toilet becomes blocked, fill the bowl using the shower or a bucket and pump vigorously.





Please note that an out of hours call to fix a blocked toilet will not be treated as an ‘emergency’. A mechanic will be with you as soon as possible during working hours. If the toilet is blocked due to your negligence an additional fee will be charged.

Waste water

All our boats have holding tanks which recover the waste water from the kitchen, showers and toilets. These tanks are empty when you collect your boat and you don’t have to worry about emptying them while you cruise.

Each boat has a warning light on the dashboard which will tell you if the tank is nearly full. If this warning light comes on, please call the base team immediately. Do not use the shower or the toilets until the tank has been emptied.

The bilge pump

Every boat takes in a little water, generally via the stern gland. A pump placed near the stern turns on automatically if there is too much water in the bilges. It is controlled by a two-position switch: manual and automatic. Keep it on automatic.

ELECTRICITY

12V electrical power

Electricity on board is provided by 12 volt batteries, recharged by the engine or by shore power. One battery is for starting, the other ones are for the domestic equipment. To ensure that the batteries remain properly charged the engine must run three to four hours each day (a little more for a boat equipped with an electric fridge or air cooling).

All boats are equipped with a 12 volt cigar-lighter type-plug. You can connect your adaptor lead for a mobile phone or any other low power equipment with the appropriate connection.

Remember that the capacity of the batteries is limited and try to keep your consumption to a minimum. Avoid leaving lights switched on unnecessarily.

220V electrical power

Some boats are equipped with 220 volt transformers for electric razors. You can plug in a mobile telephone charger or any other low power appliance but nothing else. Do not use them for hair dryers or irons.



Shore power

Some boats can connect to a power point on the quay via a shore power cable. This provides 220V power to the boat's domestic equipment and recharges the batteries. Ports equipped with power points are shown in most cruising guides. We advise you to use them whenever possible to boost the boat's electrical system.

Some boats also allow the operation of 220V appliances such as laptops while you are cruising. High wattage appliances such as hairdryers and irons are not recommended for use while cruising.

Remember to unplug the shore power cable before starting the engine and pulling away from the port. Lost or stolen shore power cables will be charged for.

Battery cut-off switches

Two big red switches enable the batteries to be isolated (for example, in the event of a fire). In normal circumstances, don't touch them. If you have a general power failure on board, you should first check that they have not been switched off by mistake.

Fuses and circuit breaker

These protect your boat's electrical circuits. In the event of a partial electrical failure you should first of all check the fuses or the circuit breakers. Your instructor will show you where they are situated on the boat.

Refrigerator



Your boat is equipped, according to its size, with one or two refrigerators. Do not expect them to perform with the same efficiency as a household fridge. It is advisable not to overload them and to avoid opening the door unnecessarily.

The refrigerators are fed by the boat's domestic batteries. When the power supply goes below 11 volts they cut off automatically so as not to damage the batteries. If this happens you should recharge them by starting the engine or by connecting to shore power.

Heating and cooling



Most of our boats are equipped with hot air heaters. They use the same diesel as the boat's engine but the heat is distributed by an electric fan system and will therefore consume energy. Never leave the heater on unnecessarily when you are away from your boat or during the night during the night. Depending on the model, your boat will also have cabin air-cooling or air-conditioning for use during warmer weather.

Fuel

Your tank will be filled before your departure, and this is normally sufficient for one week's cruising. For longer cruises, your instructor will indicate where you can refuel. Prior to departure your fuel gauge will be read so that fuel consumption can be calculated on your return.



Gas

Your boat is fed by 13 kg gas bottles which are generally located outside the boat.

Never let gas escape inside the boat. Heavier than air, it accumulates in the bilges and can be very dangerous. If you suspect a leak, close the gas bottles, the battery cut-off switch and the main gas cut-off switch, turn off all electrical appliances (fridge, water pump, bilge pump, etc.) and do not let anyone smoke. Open all doors, windows, hatches, etc. to ventilate the cabins, evacuate the boat and call for assistance immediately.

SECURITY EQUIPMENT

Fire extinguishers & fire blankets

Your boat is equipped with at least one fire extinguisher and one fire blanket. To avoid having to use them, you should respect basic fire safety advice and never leave a flame unattended and keep curtains or any other inflammable material away from the stove.

Life jackets

There is a life jacket on board for every passenger and smaller life jackets for children are available – please ask at reception before you depart. You are advised to wear a life jacket especially if you are not a confident swimmer and when going through a lock. (In certain regions, it is obligatory for everyone on board to wear a life jacket while going through locks – please consult your cruising guide).



Operating your boat

The dashboards of our boats are very similar to those of a car but the control levers are different.



The controls

The control lever engages the propeller to move the boat forwards or backwards and to accelerate. This same lever, in the neutral position, also allows the engine to be revved without engaging the propeller (and so without the boat moving), which is useful for starting and heating the engine, or recharging the batteries.

Some boats have dual controls (a steering position on the upper and lower decks). To change from one steering position to the other:

- stop the boat;
- ensure that the two throttle levers (external and internal) are in the neutral position;
- turn the transfer handle a quarter of a turn (Do not force the system: if it does not work, this is because one of the levers is not exactly in neutral).

Never change positions while the boat is moving.







Before leaving the quay, make sure that the control levers respond.



To start the engine

Firstly disengage drive by pulling out the neutral button. Then push the throttle-lever forward about half-way.

Turn the ignition key clockwise to the preheat position and keep it there for 20 seconds.

Then turn the key to the next position (and push in) to start the engine. When the engine starts, throttle back straight away.

Check that the rev counter is functioning to ensure that the key is in the correct running position.

Come back into neutral. To engage drive the neutralising button must now be pushed in, and then you are ready to cast off.

To stop the engine

Except for a few cases, the starting key is not used to stop the engine. You must proceed as follows:

- Electric stop: press the button marked “Stop” then turn the key to the off position.
- Manual stop: pull out the stop handle, turn the key to the “off” position then push back the stop handle (if you do not do this you will be unable to restart the engine). Turn off the key.



The alarm

Every boat has a visual and audio alarm. If the latter sounds this can indicate that the oil pressure is too low or that the engine is overheating.

If the alarm comes on, stop immediately and call the base. Do not continue or you could seriously damage the engine.

The propeller

In order to function properly, a propeller needs to be in perfect condition. The biggest risk of damage is whilst coming alongside. To prevent this, avoid engaging it when the stern of the boat is in shallow water. If you see a branch or any other object and it is not too late to avoid it, go into neutral.

The propeller can collect weeds, plastic bags or various other objects such as a mooring rope left trailing behind. If this happens the boat will slow down and the engine will vibrate. You can try to clear the propeller by alternatively passing from forward gear to backward gear a few times. If this does not work, the problem is more serious and you should call your departure base for instructions.

The bow thruster

Some of our boats are equipped with bow thrusters, a propeller placed crosswise at the bows allowing easier sideways movement of the boat whilst manoeuvring.

Do not use the bow thruster when coming alongside if the bow is very close to the riverbed or bank.

Do not use it if the boat is moving forwards or backwards – only when it has stopped.



The bow thruster must not be used for more than 5 seconds at a time. It is only there to briefly assist manoeuvres and is not designed to be played with.

Breakdowns and Remedies

If something on board is not working, do not hesitate to call our breakdown service. However, there are some small incidents which you may be able to solve yourself. The following is a list of the most frequent problems and the appropriate remedies.

The engine will not turn over	Check the battery cut-off switch.
The engine turns over but will not start	Re-start the pre-heating procedure. Push back the engine stop handle.
After starting the engine the alternator warning light stays on	Accelerate and the light should go out.
The engine is overheating	Check that water is coming out of the exhaust pipe.
Some of the electrics don't work	Start the motor to recharge the batteries and try again. Check fuses or circuit breakers.
None of the electric systems work	Check the volt metre. Check the battery cut-off switch.
The water level in the bilge is higher than it should be	Check that the bilge pump is working properly by turning it on manually.
The toilet water pump is not working	If the bowl is empty, fill it up with the shower or a bucket and pump vigorously.

Boat handling

This section of the handbook looks at how to handle your boat on the water and how to go through a lock. This information will be covered again when you have your practical boat handling demonstration. If you have any queries during your boat handling demonstration, please don't hesitate to ask!

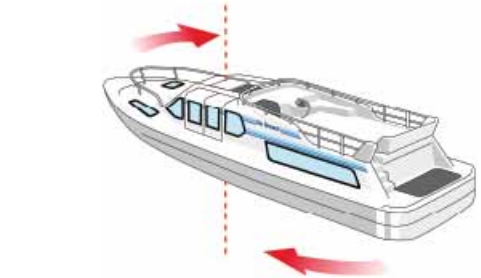






Although driving a boat is a bit like driving a car, there are some important differences!

- Your boat will be affected by both the river's current and the wind. Make sure you are aware of the effects they will have on you before setting out.
- A boat has no brakes so, to slow down or stop, you simply reverse the motor. It will take about four times its length to stop so prepare your manoeuvres well in advance.
- A boat is much heavier than a car (most of our boats weigh at least 7 tons), so it can do a lot of damage at a much slower speed. Take your time and carry out all manoeuvres slowly and deliberately. If you have the chance, watch a barge skipper handling his barge. He is never in a hurry.
- When a car changes direction, the back wheels follow the front ones. A boat, on the other hand, pivots on a point situated about one third back from the bow. When manoeuvring, always think of your stern.



- And finally, a car requires one driver who normally needs no help from his passengers. A boat requires a skipper and a crew. Before setting out, the captain should allocate tasks to everyone on board. And keep in mind that the captain is in sole charge of his vessel and his word is final.



For boats equipped with a sliding roof, make sure that the roof is latched either in the open or the closed position.

Setting off

Plan your day's cruising

Use your navigation guide and maps to plan your day's cruising. Most show kilometre points to enable you to calculate the distances and have a table giving you cruising times between the main ports. Cruising at no more than 6km/hr you should aim for around 4 to 5 hours cruising each day.

Start the engines!

Before leaving your mooring:

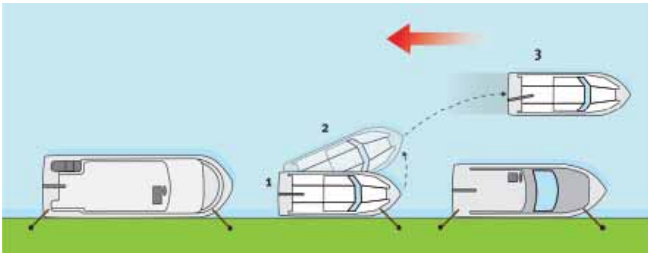
- check that the throttle lever is in neutral and that the button for engaging the propeller is not out.
- if your boat has dual steering positions, ensure that the one you want to use is the one selected.
- start the engine.
- make sure that all the gauges on the dashboard function normally and that the cooling water is flowing properly from the rear exhaust.
- make sure that all loose items on the deck cannot be blown off or knocked off by low branches. Bicycles must be attached firmly to the railings by their anti-theft devices.
- make sure that everyone is safely on board.
- allocate a position on the deck to each crew member.
- ask your crew to cast off and bring the lines back on board.

Getting under-way

Leaving the quay

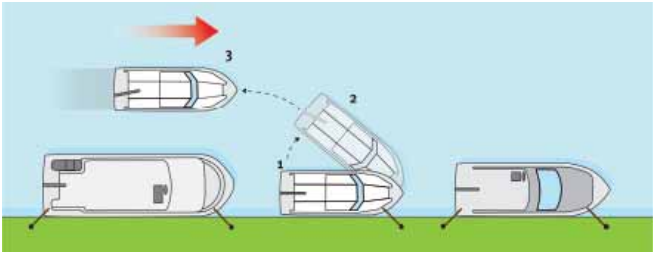
Firstly observe the wind and current conditions. See if the strongest of the two comes from the front or the rear of the boat.

If the boat is moored facing the wind or the current, cast off the bow line first, then push the bow towards the middle of the river. Engage forward gear.

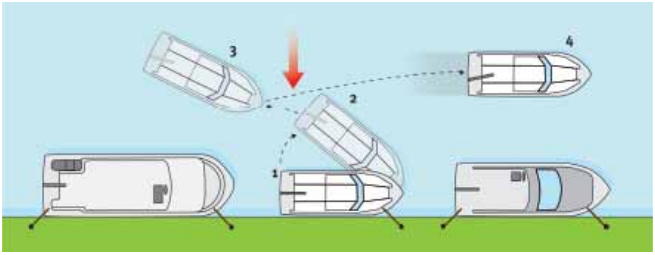


If the wind or current are pushing against the stern of the boat, the manoeuvre is slightly more delicate. Cast off the stern first, then push the stern away from the bank to free it. Move to the middle of the river/canal in reverse gear before changing to forward gear.





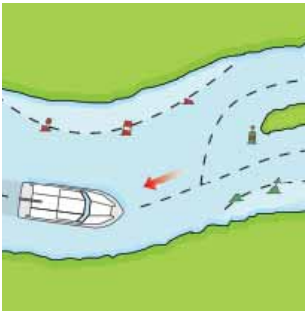
If the boat is stuck to the quay because of very strong wind, let go the stern line and engage forward gear. Whilst manoeuvring, the bow remains moored, but ready to be cast off. The helmsman turns the wheel sharply towards the quay while accelerating a little. When the stern has moved out from the quay, one of the crew members casts off the bow line and the helmsman brings the boat to the middle of the river in reverse gear.



The navigable channel

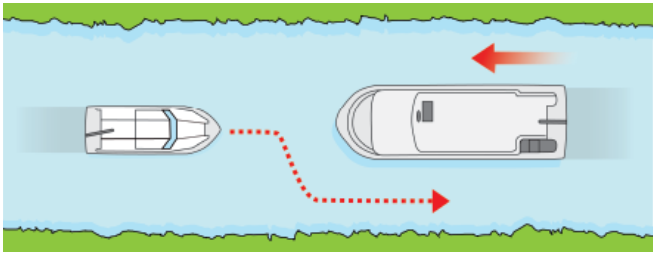
On a river and sometimes on a canal, the navigable channel is indicated by coloured buoys. The rule is simple: a boat going upstream should leave the red buoys on its left and the green (or black) buoys on its right.

A boat going downstream (i.e. going down towards the sea or going down a set of locks), should leave the green (or black) buoys on its left and the red buoys on its right.



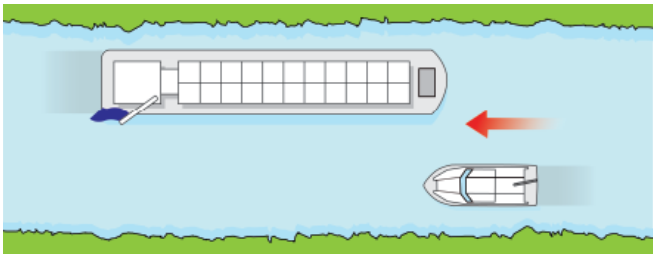
Two boats crossing

Normally boats must cross port to port but a downstream boat always has priority over an upstream boat. When the waterway is wide enough, boats going downstream stay in the middle and upstream boats move to the left or the right.



On the Continent, the skipper of a commercial barge going upstream who wishes to stay on the right bank and cross starboard to starboard will display on his starboard side

- during the day, a blue flag;
- during the night, a white flashing light.





Overtaking

You can overtake a boat in front of you on the port or starboard side as long as the manoeuvre presents no danger. On a narrow waterway, it is usual to pass on the port side. The boat being overtaken should slow down and, if necessary, go aside to leave room for the overtaking boat.

If the waterway is wide and the manoeuvre presents no great problem, you do not need to announce your intentions. If the channel is narrow and you would like the boat being overtaken to go to one side, you should use the horn signals provided for in the navigation rules

I want to overtake on your starboard side.

I want to overtake on your port side.

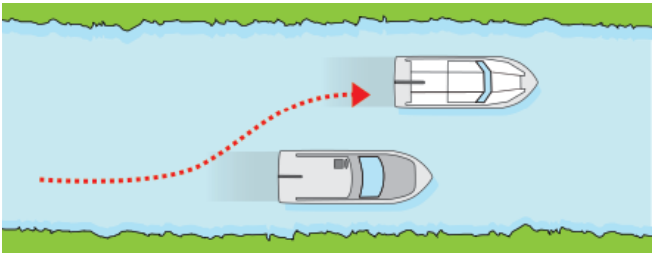
If it is not possible to overtake on the side requested but possible on the other side, the boat being overtaken should reply as follows:



- **you can overtake on the port side.**
- **you can overtake on the starboard side.**

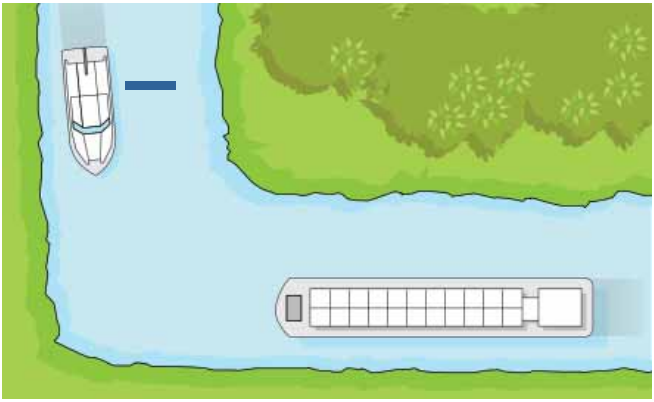
If overtaking is impossible, the boat in front should give 5 short signals.

- **overtaking impossible.**



Blind bends

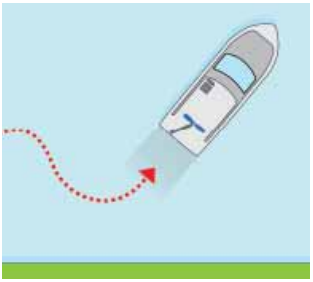
In certain tight bends, you should announce your presence with one long blast of your horn.

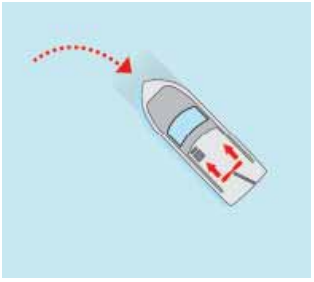


Navigation lights

Navigation lights should be lit if you navigate after sundown or in fog.

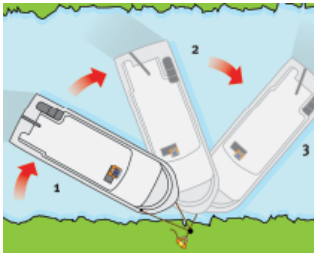
How to turn around

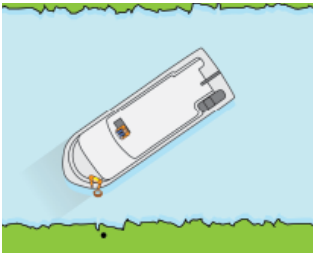




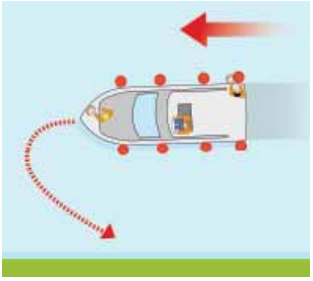
Choose an area sufficiently wide. Slow down whilst keeping in forward gear. Turn the wheel and accelerate sharply to swing the stern around. Before reaching the opposite bank, stop the boat by going into reverse. The boat will continue to pivot with the momentum. When it stops turning, give another forward thrust and so on until the manoeuvre is completed.

In a very narrow section of water, there is another simple method you can use. Slowly approach a clear section of the bank and put a member of the crew ashore with the forward mooring line. With the bow held fast, accelerate gently in forward gear pushing against the bank. The stern will come slowly away from the bank. Turn sufficiently to enable you to move off in the other direction.





Mooring



Choose your mooring place to avoid being too close to locks, bridges, etc.

When approaching the bank, check that the chosen area does not conceal any hidden danger such as a tree stump, a large submerged rock or stone or anything else that could damage the hull.

On a river, always moor into the current, even if you have to turn around.

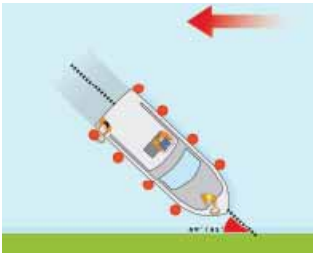
Make sure that there is sufficient water under the boat in case the level goes down over night. Also ensure that the mooring lines are not too tight.

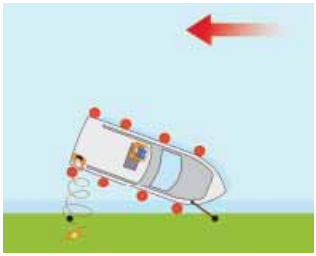
If you have any doubt, moor your bow to the bank and stretch a rope from the stern to the bow on the far side of the boat to keep the stern away from the bank.

Mooring parallel to the quay

To moor alongside a quay, place one crew member at each mooring line, forward and aft. Approach the quay slowly, keeping the bow into the wind or current; the boat should form an angle of around 45° with the bank. When you are two to three metres away, slow down by going into reverse. As soon as the bow touches, a crew member should jump ashore and make fast. The stern can then be pulled in by hand.







How to avoid accidents

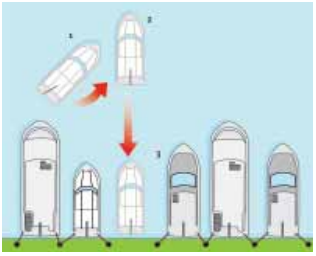
Most accidents occur when a boat is being moored or in a lock. Here are some rules to follow:

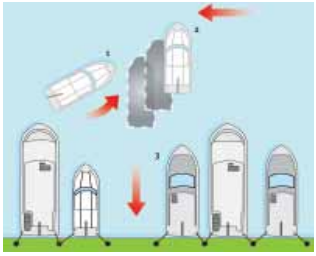
- never let children put their feet or hands out of the boat while approaching a quay.
- if you make a mistake, do not try to limit the damage by pushing the boat out with your hands or feet.
- check the nature of the ground before jumping ashore.
- never moor with your lines across a towpath. Anyone passing could injure themselves badly.

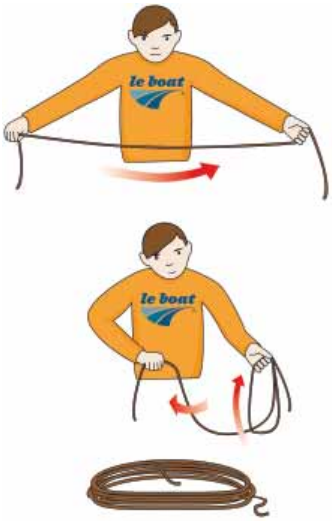
Mooring stern to the quay

In many ports, you will be obliged to moor your boat “stern on”. This manoeuvre can be particularly difficult, especially if there is a strong wind or current. It is important to come in forward, as close as possible to the place you wish to moor. Turn around making sure you allow for wind or current, and finish in reverse gear. If necessary, a crew member should get off to help the manoeuvre.











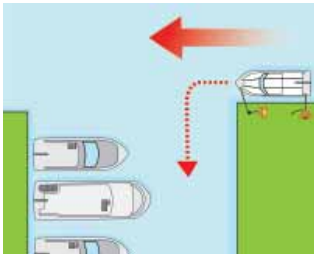
Mooring lines

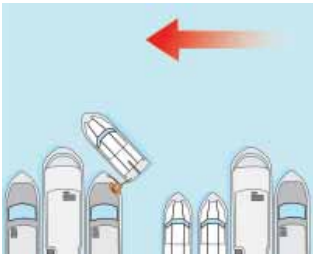
On board your boat you will find three mooring lines each about 15 metres long. Take good care of them and they will serve you well, neglect them or misuse them and they can be dangerous.

- Once used, each rope should be carefully coiled and placed on the deck, ready for to be thrown (see left). This is most important. Tangled ropes can cause accidents.
- Never leave the lines trailing in the water, even if they float, they can be drawn into the propeller.
- Remove any knots before they become too tight to untie. Knots can prevent lines running freely at an inconvenient moment.

Use your mooring lines to help manoeuvre

When the wind or current are very strong, it can be wise to put a crew member ashore and use a mooring line to help in a difficult manoeuvre.





Running aground

If you have gone aground, firstly open one of the floor hatches and check that the boat is not taking in water. Use the boat hook to check around the perimeter of the boat to see what it is that has stopped you.

If you are aground on mud or sand, try to free yourself by going in reverse, positioning the heaviest crew member at the bow. If this does not work stop trying and contact the base.

If the riverbed is rocky or you detect any other hard obstacles, do not attempt anything; simply contact your departure base.

Never ask to be towed by another boat without the advice of one of our staff members.

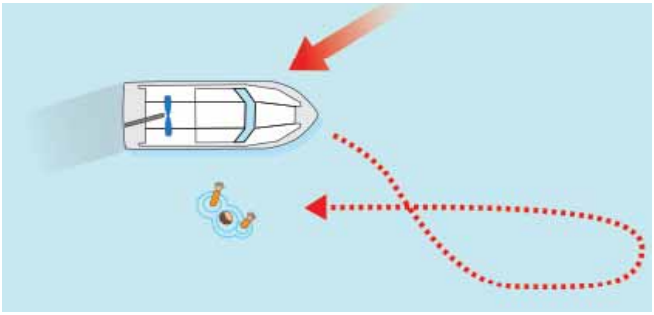
If after there is some damage and your boat begins to take in water, go towards the nearest bank, try to reduce the leak with towels, pillows or cloths (anything will do) and call us. Remember that the bucket on the boat is compulsory and can, in this case, be very useful as a bailer.



What to do if someone falls in the water

Turn towards the person in the water to keep the propeller away from him then put the engine in neutral. Throw a line or a life buoy. Move away far enough to be able to turn round and come back on the windward side. Put the engine into neutral as you approach; avoid going into reverse.

All our boats are equipped with swimming ladders but if the bank is close enough, it may be easier for the person to climb out on the bank before getting back on board.



If one of your crew falls into a lock, you should first of all ensure that they are not crushed by your boat or any other boat in the lock:

- tighten the lines fore and aft and ask the other boats in the lock to do the same thing.
- stop the motor.
- throw a life buoy or a line to the person in the water.
- in a manual lock, warn the lock-keeper and help him close the sluice gates; in an automatic lock, stop the locking procedure by pushing the red emergency button or pulling on the red bar.
- help the person out of the water via the ladder in the lock wall or the boat's swimming ladder.

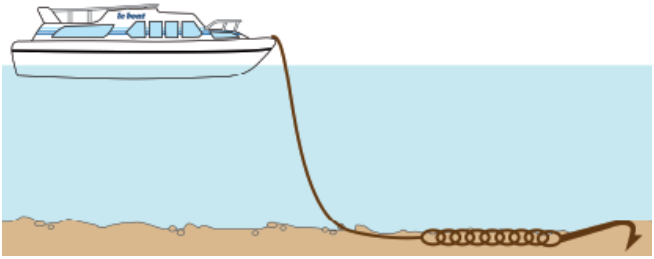
The boat hook

Thanks to its plastic hook, the boat hook is used to pull your boat towards a quay or a bank. If you use it to push yourself away from a quay, a difficult and dangerous exercise, make sure you do not place it in front of your body or in front of the boat's windows. Do not use the boat hook while the boat is at cruising speed, it should be virtually at a standstill.

The anchor

Your boat is equipped with an anchor attached to the boat by a rope and ten metres of chain. On a canal it is forbidden to use it but on a river, for example, in the event of a motor breakdown, it can be very useful. Leave a good length of chain on the bottom; it is the weight of the chain that will stop your boat moving.

To recover your anchor easily, all you need to do is go ahead slowly towards it while a crew member at the bow hauls in the chain.







Some useful knots

All marine knots have their uses, but at least three are indispensable on the inland waterways.

A. The cleat knot: All you need to do is pass the cord in a figure of eight around the cleat. The last loop can be reversed to block the rope.

B. Round turn and two half hitches: the best knot for mooring a boat and the easiest to untie.



C. The clove hitch: this knot is particularly useful if you want to moor to a tree or a post. It is two reversed half-hitches. Its hold is extremely strong.

D. The bow line: this knot is used to make a loop in the end of a rope without splicing. It is a useful knot but needs some practise.



Waterways Structures

Weirs

Some locks are situated very close to weirs and it is important to keep well away from them. Make sure as you approach these locks that you go directly to the mooring area with mooring lines ready. Check that your anchor is also ready to be used if necessary. **Never use your dinghy or swim near a weir.**

Bridges

Often only one arch of the bridge is suitable to pass through. Follow the signs scrupulously and check the map before proceeding.

Always pass through the centre of the arch as the pylons are usually wider under the water.

On the canals the old bridges are often very low and present a danger both for crew members and for the tables and umbrellas placed on the top deck. These bridges and the height available are shown in your canal guide.

When approaching a lifting bridge or a turning bridge, stop well in advance to wait for it to be opened.

Locks

Depending on the region you are in, locks may be manually operated, electrically operated or automatic, but whatever the system, the manoeuvres are always much the same.

- When approaching a lock, stay at least 100 metres short to enable a boat coming out of the chamber sufficient room to manoeuvre.
- If there are several boats waiting, each one should go into the lock in the order of arrival. Official boats (navigation service, fire boats or customs vessels) as well as duly authorised passenger boats have priority over leisure craft. You should also let commercial barges go ahead of you.
- The lock-keeper is sole in charge of his lock. You must at all times follow his instructions.

Certain vertical weirs are particularly dangerous as the back current will draw small craft or swimmers towards the wall. Even a very low wall can be lethal. Keep well away and do not bathe near one of these constructions.

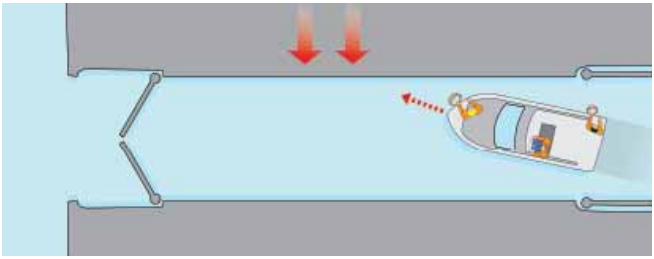


The skipper should warn his crew members when approaching a low bridge. Remember to lower your parasol if you have one.



Never make fast (tie up) to a bollard in a descending lock.

- Going into an empty lock, moor, if possible on the windward side. Your departure will be all the easier as the wind will push you away from the lock wall.



- Stay at a good distance from the lock gates: too close to the upstream gates in a descending lock, and your rudder could sit on the sill. In an ascending lock, the bow could get caught in the gate's beams… with disastrous consequences!
- Put the ropes through the rings or around the bollards on the lock surface and bring them back to the boat with one turn around the cleat (see left). A crew member on each line then holds the boat tight against the lock wall.



Manual locks

Despite the various different projects to mechanise locks on the tourist waterways, you will still come across many manually operated locks.

- In most of these a lock-keeper is present to carry out the manoeuvres. Nevertheless, you should put at least one crew member ashore to help him. The day is long for a busy lock-keeper, especially in summer, and your help will be greatly appreciated.
- You should also respect his working hours and beware that he can close the lock a few minutes before the official closing time if he thinks that by letting you through he will be late for lunch. Be patient and do not attempt to operate the lock yourself.
- The sluices which enable the lock to fill or empty are manoeuvred by handles. They can be dangerous and you should never handle them unless authorised by the lock-keeper. Especially, never allow a child to handle them.



Going down

Enter slowly and stop as far as possible from the upstream gates. Moor fore and aft, passing the mooring lines around the lock bollards and back to the boat so that they can be recovered easily when you leave. Do not make fast or you run the risk of hanging your boat up in the lock.



One crew member closes one gate on the upstream side. He must then wait until the two gates are completely shut before opening the downstream sluice gate, otherwise the current will close them violently.



As the boat goes down, one person on each line holds the boat tight against the lock wall. If there are only two of you aboard, the stern line can be handled from the lock surface.



Once the lock is empty, the crew member opens one of the gates and the lock-keeper the other. Wait until the water has reached its level and do not force the gates. Once the gates are open, go slowly out of the lock. The crew member on shore can rejoin the boat via the ladder in the lock chamber or, preferably via the pontoon downstream from the lock.











Going up

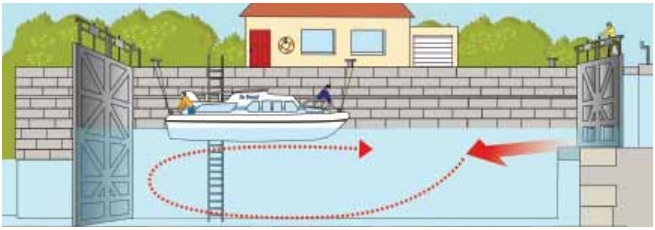
One crew member goes up onto the lock surface to take the lines. Enter slowly and stop as far as possible from the gates. If you are alone in the lock, stay about two thirds back from the upstream gates. Pass the fore and aft lines around the bollards and bring them back to the boat.



The crew member closes one gate; the lock-keeper closes the other. If you are only two aboard, the stern line can be handled from the lock surface.



If he has permission, the crewman helps the lock-keeper open the sluice gates. A crewman aboard handles the bow line and another the stern line. In a small lock, as soon as the sluices are opened, a circular current will push the boat towards the upstream gates. To keep the boat still, the two lines must be kept tight during the whole manoeuvre.



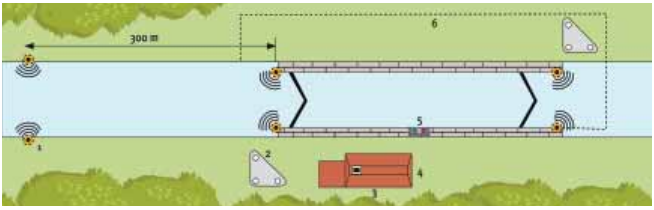
When the lock is full, the lock-keeper opens one gate; the crew member opens the other and goes aboard. The boat is driven slowly out of the lock.



Automatic locks

Little by little manual locks are being replaced by automatic locks operating without the help of a lock-keeper. These locks are set in motion in several different ways:

- A pole placed on a suspended cable above a canal:
  – slow down just before the pole.
  – turn right a quarter of a turn.
  – wait at a distance until the lights indicate that the lock is ready.
- An automatic detector placed on the bank:
  – pass the detector very slowly to give it time to register the presence of your boat.



Automatic locks. *1. Advance radar detection 2. Traffic lights 3. Control cabin 4. Intercom 5. Blue pull wire (lift), red pull wire (pull down in case of accident or false manoeuvre) 6. Lock entrance detector: radar, pole, loop, or photoelectric.*

- An electronic control unit that will be given to you as you enter a lock chain:
  – When you come close to the lock, press the button once only or the system will register several boats.
- A card that will be given to you as you enter a series of automatic locks. These locks are fast and easy (no handles to turn), but you are solely in charge of the manoeuvre and, as such, you must be all the more careful to ensure the safety of your boat and its occupants:
  – all these locks have an emergency stop system which closes the sluices. Be ready, with the other members of the crew, to use it.
  – make sure at all times that the ropes cannot be caught in the gaps between the stones in the lock wall.
  – do not stop your boat between the detection system and the lock.
  – once the gates are open, go out of the lock immediately.

Flights of locks

In certain areas locks are organised in chains. This means that when you go through one lock, the next one is being automatically prepared for you. For obvious reasons you should warn the navigation service staff if you have to stop in the middle of a chain of locks.

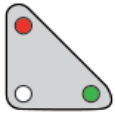
Lock Signals

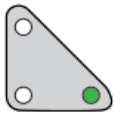

No light: lock out of order


No entry: lock out of order, telephone


No entry: lock in use


No access: lock preparing for your entry


Enter at your own risk (normal mooring not possible)


Enter lock immediately





Tunnels

The tunnels do not present any particular problem but you must respect the following rules:

- it is forbidden to moor in a tunnel or in the approach cutting. Once you are under way, do not stop.
- put on your navigation lights as you go through.
- turn off your gas cooker and any other flame. Smoke in the confined space of a tunnel can be very dangerous.
- in the event of a breakdown or other incident, you can walk out of the tunnel using the footway.
- note the available height and stay in the middle of the boat as you go through.

Signs and signals

If you are sometimes tempted to sound your horn to greet another boat, remember that on a navigable waterway specific horn signals exist so that you can announce your intentions. You will find these signals on the back cover; learn to use them as they may be useful in the event of a difficult manoeuvre or limited visibility.

On the back cover you will also find all the warning signs most frequently seen on inland waterways. Signs indicating restrictions or obligations are in red and black on a white background. Signs giving information are generally blue or green. Locks and bridges have their own special signs and lights.





Sharing the waterways

During your cruise, you will share the waterways with many other users. These may include commercial barges, fishermen, sailors, bathers and riverside land owners. There is room for everyone as long as you observe the basic rules of courtesy:

- keep your distance from fishermen and slow down when approaching them.
- always pass slowly and at a good distance from moored boats.
- some banks are private so do not stop and go ashore just anywhere.
- respect speed limits. To ensure you are not going too fast, glance at your wake, your wash must not be breaking against the bank.
- do not push ahead of a commercial barge if by doing so you will delay it at the next lock. Remember the barge skipper is working and his time is precious.
- occasionally on rivers you will go past youngsters in canoes, sailing boats and rowing skiffs. Stay well clear of them as they are often quite inexperienced.

Country	Le Boat base	Address	Telephone no.	GPS coordinates
Belgium	Nieuwpoort	Brugse Vaart 48, B - 8620 Nieuwpoort	0032 (0) 582 366 23	E2° 46.271` N51° 8.304`
	Gent	Portus Gande, Veerkai, B - 9000 Ghent	0032 (0) 582 366 23	E3° 44.054` N51° 3.224`
France	Beaucaire	14, Quai de la Paix Nord, F - 30300 Beaucaire	0033 (0) 466 594 608	E4° 37.964` N43° 48.413`
	Branges	Port de Plaisance, F - 71500 Branges	0033 (0) 385 749 233	E5° 10.7` N46° 38.597`
	Castelnaudary	Le Grand Bassin, F - 11492 Castelnaudary	0033 (0) 468 945 294	E1° 57.43` N43° 18.75`
	Châtel Censoir	Base Nautique, rue Magny, F - 89660 Châtel Censoir	0033 (0) 386 810 731	E3° 37.82` N47° 31.98`
	Châtillon-sur-Loire	Rue du Port, F - 45360 Châtillon-sur-Loire	0033 (0) 238 310 964	E2° 45.47` N47° 35.66
	Decize	Bassin de la Jonction, F - 58300 Decize	0033 (0) 386 254 664	E3° 27.276` N46° 49.276`
	Douelle	Le Moulinat, F - 46140 Douelle	0033 (0) 565 200 879	E1° 21.72` N44° 28.398`
	Fontenoy-le-Château	Port de Plaisance, F - 88240 Fontenoy-le-Château	0033 (0) 329 304 398	E-2° 20.76` N47° 15.52`
	Gray	Halte Nautique Ile Sauzay, F - 70100 Gray	0033 (0) 384 649 525	E5° 35.642` N47° 27.011`
	Hesse	Port du Canal, F - 57400 Hesse	0033 (0) 387 036 174	E7° 2.606` N48° 41.496`
	Homps	Port Minervois, F - 11200 Homps	0033 (0) 468 912 400	E2° 43` N43° 16.14`
	Jarnac	Quai François Mitterrand, F - 16200 Jarnac	0033 (0) 545 365 998	W0° 10.41` N45° 40.682`
	Le Mas d'Agenais	44, l'Ecluse, F - 47430 Le Mas d'Agenais	0033 (0) 553 895 080	E0° 13.127` N44° 24.795`
	Messac	Port de Plaisance BP 8, F - 35480 Messac	0033 (0) 299 346 011	W1° 48.842` N47° 49.616`
	Migennes	17, Rue Pierre et Marie Curie, F - 89400 Migennes	0033 (0) 386 800 860	E3° 30.40` N47° 57.71`
	Montauban	Capitainerie, Rue des Oules, Port Canal, F - 82000 Montauban	0033 (0) 563 205 524	E1° 20.43` N44° 0.46`
	Narbonne	7, Quai d'Alsace, F - 11100 Narbonne	0033 (0) 468 651 455	E2° 59.868` N43° 11.25`
	Port Cassafieres	Port Cassafières, F - 34420 Portiragnes	0033 (0) 467 909 170	E3° 22.32` N43° 17.49`
	Saarbrücken	Bismarckstraße 153, D - 66121 Saarbrücken	0033 (0) 387 036 174	E7° 0.222` N49° 13.676`
	Saint Gilles	2 Quai du canal, F - 30800 Saint Gilles	0033 (0) 466 872 266	E4° 26.20` N43° 40.54`
	Saint-Jean-de-Losne	La Gare d'Eau, F - 21170 Saint-Jean-de-Losne	0033 (0) 380 270 350	E5° 15.757` N47° 6.38`
	Tannay	Petites Ilotes, F - 58190 Tannay	0033 (0) 386 293 552	E3° 37.202` N47° 21.624`
	Trèbes	Port de Plaisance, F - 11800 Trèbes	0033 (0) 468 787 375	E2° 26.647` N43° 12.604`
Germany	Jabel	Yachthafen Maribell, Am Ufer 1-2, D - 17194, Jabel	0049 (0) 339 215 0956	E12° 32.375` N53° 31.857`
	Marina Wolfsbruch	Wolfsbruch 3, D - 16831 Kleinzerlang	0049 (0) 339 215 0956	E12° 53.97` N53° 10.85`
	Potsdam	Yachthafen Burchardi, Kastanienallee 22C, D - 14471 Potsdam	0049 (0) 339 215 0956	E13° 1.78` N52° 23.27`
Holland	Woudsend	De Zwaan 18, NL - 8551 Woudsend RK	0031 (0) 514 591 251	E5° 38.43` N52° 56.71`
	Strand Horst	Palmboschweg 18, NL - 3853 LB Ermelo	0031 (0) 514 591 251	E5° 33.87` N52° 18.99
Italy	Casale	Via Nuova Trevigianadi Lughignano N. 1, I - 31032 Casale Sul Sile	0039 (0) 339 192 2161	E12° 18.22` N45° 38.17`
	Precenicco	Piazza Roma 14, I - 33050 Precenicco – Udine	0039 (0) 043 158 9710	E13° 4.697` N45° 47.376`
	Porto Levante	Club Nautico Marina Nuova de Porto, Via C.Columbo 37E, I - 45014 Porto Levante Di Porto Viro (RO)	0039 (0) 426 666 025	E12° 19.538` N45° 2.687`
England	Horning (Norfolk Broads)	Ferry View Road, Horning, Norfolk, NR12 8PT	0044 (0) 1692 630 614	E1° 28.258` N52° 41.666`
	Benson (Thames)	Waterfront, Benson, OX10 6SJ	0044 (0) 1491 824 067	W1° 6.912` N51° 37.19`
Scotland	Laggan, (West Highland Sailing)	Laggan Locks, Spean Bridge, Inverness, PH34 4EB	0044 (0) 1809 501 234	W4° 49.576` N57° 1.575`
Ireland	Belturbet	The Marina, Belturbet, Co. Cavan, Ireland	00353 (0) 499 522 933	W7° 26.435` N54° 6.324`
	Carrick-on-Shannon	The Marina Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim, Ireland	00353 (0) 719 627 621	W8° 5.86` N53° 56.64
	Portumna	Connaught Harbour Portumna, Co. Galway, Ireland	00353 (0) 909 741 120	W8° 11.743` N53° 5.558`



SIGNALS

PROHIBITION


Do not go beyond this point


Closed section


Passing and crossing forbidden


Overtaking forbidden


Overtaking forbidden for convoys



Forbidden to remain in area indicated


Anchoring forbidden

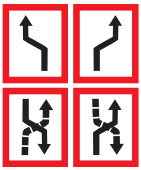

Mooring forbidden


Turning forbidden


Forbidden to create wash

OBLIGATION


Take direction of arrow


Turn towards side of channel indicated


Stay on side of channel indicated


Obligation to stop in certain circumstances



Maximum speed allowed km/h


Sound your horn


Be especially careful

RESTRICTION


Depth limited


Height above water level limited


Width limited



Channel is situated 40m from bank

INFORMATION


End of restriction or obligation


Authorisation to proceed


Boats coming out


Electric cable crossing


Ferry crossing with cable



Mooring allowed


Anchoring allowed


Mooring allowed


Turning point indicated


Main waterway, secondary waterway


Drinking water



Water ski zone


Telephone

LOCKS

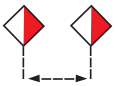

Out of service Lock closed


Prepare to enter


Enter

BRIDGES


Passage forbidden


Forbidden to pass outside area indicated


Pass, no opposing traffic

Pass, traffic in both directions

BUOYS

Buoy right side (going upstream)

Stakes right bank (going upstream)

Buoy left side (going upstream)

Stakes left bank (going upstream)

Dividing buoy

HORN SIGNALS

(4 seconds)
Attention

(1 second)
I am coming towards starboard

I am coming towards port

I am going into reverse

I am out of control

Danger of collision

I want to overtake on your starboard

I want to overtake on your port

Do not overtake

I am going to turn to starboard

I am going to turn to port