Enjoy a break on the Cambridgeshire waterways with Fox Narrowboats

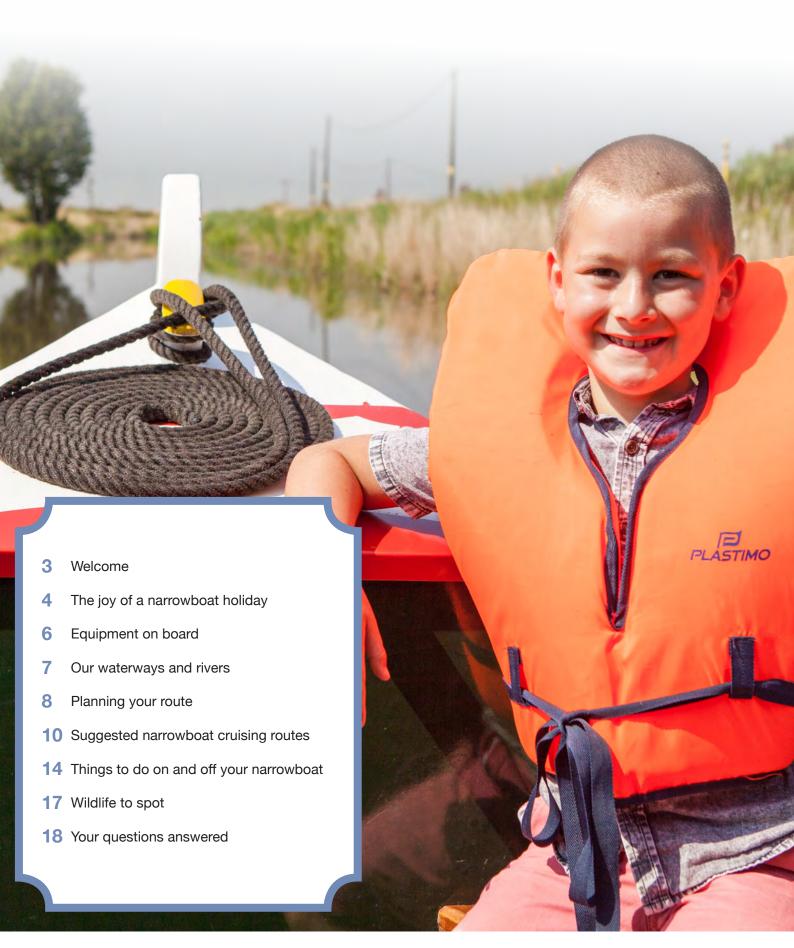








Contents



Welcome

Welcome to Fox Narrowboats...

Our marina and boat hire base is situated on the outskirts of the picturesque market town of March, Cambridgeshire. We are nestled in the heart of the Fens on the Middle Level Waterways, with direct links to the River Ouse and River Nene. Near to the cities of Cambridge, Peterborough and Ely, we are easily accessible by road and rail.

Like many Fenland towns, March was once an island surrounded by marshes. It occupied the second largest "island" in the Great Level. As the land was drained and the river network developed, the town grew and prospered as a trading centre.

A Fox Narrowboats holiday allows you to unwind and enjoy a slower pace of life for the duration of your holiday. Progress is made at an unhurried rate, meandering through the waterways network, taking in the rural views, historic treasures, waterside pubs and wildlife along the way. Seeing the Fens by boat gives you a whole new perspective to the area and the rich heritage that is hidden along the way.

There is no itinerary - you set your own agenda. In a week by river you are likely to cover the distance you could cover in an hour by car, but the journey will be a far richer one!

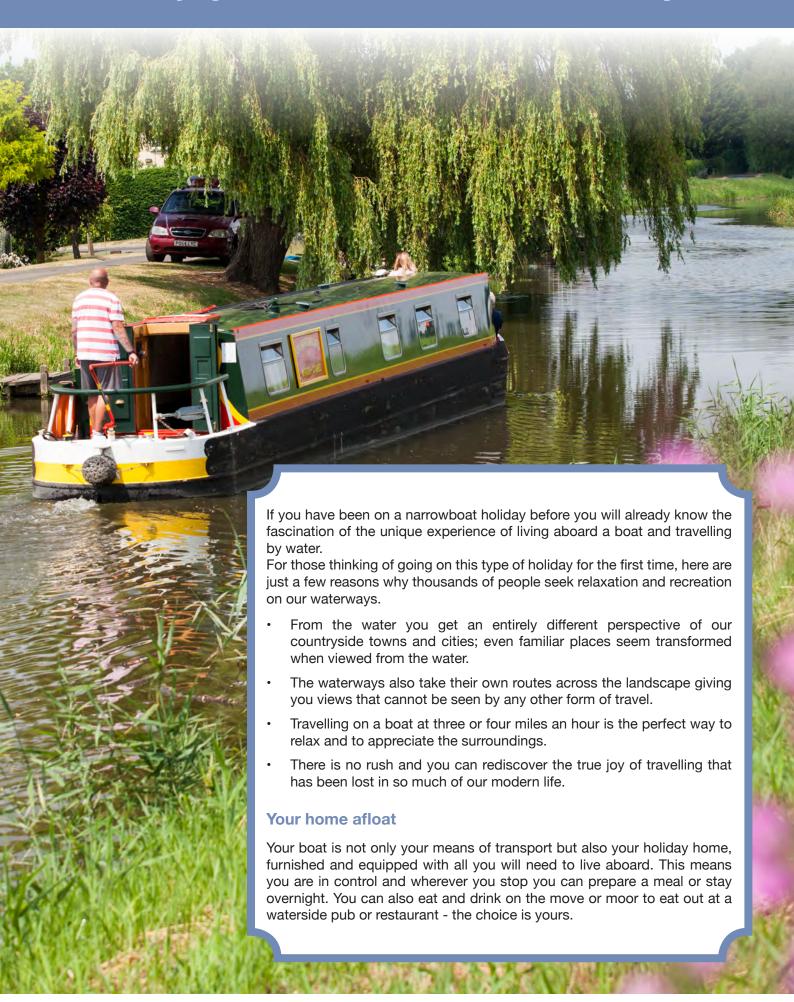
Our narrowboat holidays start from a 3 night long weekend and grow through 4,7,10,11,14 or more nights to build a holiday afloat to suit you. We also offer a Day Boat hire service, ideal for a family day out or a first impression of the riches narrowboats can bring.

Fox Narrowboats is a family run business with a warm, friendly welcome and experience of narrowboat holidays stretching back generations.

All our narrowboats are hand built and fitted out on site by our skilled boat builders, coupling hulls designed for easy steering and trouble free manoeuvering, with the best technology and comfort in interior fittings to provide some of the finest narrowboats afloat.



The joys of a narrowboat holiday



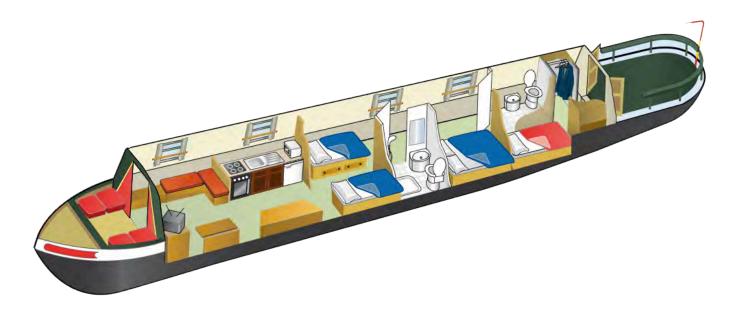
Each narrowboat is carpeted throughout the saloon and cabin; a comfortable seating area allows you to watch the flatscreen TV, listen to the stereo and eat meals at the fold-out table.

The kitchen is equipped with all the modern cooking facilities, full-sized cooker, a fridge with small freezer compartment, a microwave, sink unit, work tops and a range of storage cupboards.

You will also be able to enjoy, with our compliments, a welcome pack of tea, coffee, and sugar to help begin your holiday wind-down.

All boats have a cabin with a fixed double berth and seating that converts to single or double berth, along with additional berths on our larger boats. The bathroom has a full size washbasin, flushing toilet and a shower compartment with constant hot water. All our boats are fitted with gas central heating for perfect comfort. Duvets and freshly laundered linen and towels are also provided.

While narrowboats are compact, they are generally accessible and typically suitable for any person with sufficient mobility to climb a short flight of stairs.









Equipment on board

Cutlery box and cutlery Corkscrew / Bottle opener

Bread bin

Chopping board Bread knife

Kettle Tea tray

Milk / Water jug Sugar basin Condiment set

One pint measuring jug

Fruit bowl
Carving knife
Carving fork
Carving dish
Ornaments
Toilet roll holder

Toilet brush and holder

Dinner plates Tea plates Fish slice

Kitchen scissors Potato peeler Potato masher Vegetable knife Chopping knife Tin opener

Whisk

Mixing spoons Mixing bowl

Ladle

Roasting tin

Cups Saucers Pie dish

Casserole dish Colander

Frying pan
Large saucepan
Medium saucepan

Small saucepan

Milk pan Oven mitt

Waste bin with lid Washing up bowl

Mugs

Wine glasses

Broom Bucket Floor cloth Mop

Dustpan and brush

Cafetiere
Tea strainer
Butter dish
Toast rack
Tea pot
Grater
Tumblers



Our waterways and rivers

Cambridgeshire Waterways

If you look at the map overleaf, you will see that our marina at March is located in the heart of Cambridgeshire's special boating waters, composed of the rivers Nene, Great Ouse and its tributaries, and the historic Middle Level system of man-made waterways

Although these routes are centred around Cambridgeshire, the **River Nene** extends into Northamptonshire and the **River Great Ouse** gives access into Norfolk and Bedfordshire. There are over 200 miles of cruising waterways here, almost twice the distance available on the Norfolk Broads and with a much more varied landscape. There is nowhere else that you can cruise through rural landscapes containing three ancient cities - Peterborough, Ely and Cambridge - all in the same county.

All our boats are licensed for cruising on the River Nene, River Great Ouse, River Cam and The Middle Level Navigations. Your boat is filled with all the fuel you need before you start your journey and is included in the cost of your holiday.

The Middle Level Navigations

The waterways that make up the Middle Level system are a mixture of natural rivers and man made channels that were started early in the 17th century. The Dutch engineer, Cornelius Vermuyden, was employed by a company lead by Francis, Earl of Bedford to drain a large area of land now known as the Bedford bank. The work included the Bedford River and nine other major drains.

The draining of the Fens was a cause of great dispute between the Fen Men, who lived in the marshes by fishing and catching wildfowl, and the landowners who were keen to use the land for agriculture.

The legacy of the draining of the land can still be seen in the naming of the artificial channels such as the Old Bedford River (completed in 1637), the New Bedford River (completed in 1652) and the Forty Foot River (1649).

One unexpected consequence of the draining of the Fens was the shrinking of the dried out land. Over the years the land has sunk and most of the area is now below sea-level, meaning that Middle Level rivers now have to be pumped up to sea-level to drain the land.

Our Rivers

Cruising below sea-level is a unique experience but it is only one of the many things that make this area attractive to boaters. These waterways have locks that can take us from the Fenlands up to the Midland uplands at Bedford and Northampton. Locks not only lift us up into more hilly countryside but working through locks also provides an activity that for many boaters is an essential part of the charm and interest of the waterways.

The **Great Ouse** can be entered from the Middle Level at Salters Lode. It runs for 69 miles up to Bedford, passing through Ely, St Ives, Huntingdon and St Neots on the way, as well as many small villages. This is a delightful river to cruise through lush rural landscapes with stops at some of the many historic towns and villages.

The Great Ouse has four navigable tributaries the most famous being the **River Cam** taking you to the university city of Cambridge, surely a major tourist attraction and one that is best visited by boat. The other tributaries of the Great Ouse are the **River Lark, River Little Ouse** and **River Wissey**.

The **River Nene** is accessed from the Middle Level at Peterborough, an ancient city at the edge of the Fens. The abbey here was sacked by Hereward the Wake in 1070, destroyed by fire in 1116 and was replaced by a Norman cathedral that was completed in 1155.

Upstream from Peterborough the river has a number of locks and passes many interesting towns and villages on the way to Northampton.



Planning your route

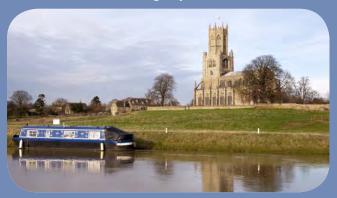
Nene Valley Railway, Wansford



Bedford Lock



Fotheringhay Church



Cockup Bridge, The Lodes



Rivers
Middle Level Network

Oundle

Thrapston

Wellingborough

Northampton

St Neots

Eaton Socon

Bedford

Bedford Bridge



Kings College Chapel, Cambridge





Planning your route

We have suggested some of our most popular routes on the pages overleaf, but there are many more possible cruises as the map above shows.

Our website, www.foxboats.co.uk/waterways has further suggestions, along with a table showing number of miles and locks from our base at March to various locations. These tables show only the major routes but will give you an idea of the sort of distances and timings that can be expected on our waterways. Once you have decided the number of hours you want to cruise each day, you can calculate what outward and return distances can be covered in the time available. There is also a online planner that allows you to calculate times and distances for any route you wish at Canal Plan AC www.canalplan.org.uk

Maps and Apps

Comprehensive guidebooks and maps are available from Imray (The River Great Ouse & Tributaries, Fenland Waterways & The River Nene) and the Environment Agency (River Nene & River Great Ouse), ideal for both route planning, and for navigation during your holiday. A free app, Open Canal Map, available on both iPhone & Android shows the waterways network, along with useful information such as water points and moorings. Once underway it will also use GPS to show your current location on the map.

Houghton Mill, Huntingdon



Wicken Fen



Chinese Bridge, Godmanchester



Ely Cathedral



Suggested Narrowboat cruising routes

1. March to Ely

Approx 18 cruising hours return trip

This trip involves the passage of a short stretch of tidal river between Salter's Lode and Denver Sluice which can only be completed at certain tide times. When planning your trip, contact the Lock keeper at Denver Lock on 01366 382 340 to ascertain the tide times for the outward and return trips. It takes about 5 hours to cruise between Salter's Lode and our base at March, so once you have all this information you will be able to plan your journey.

Turning left from our marina you will shortly come to the Fenland market town of March where you will find free visitor moorings on either side of the town bridge. Like all the ancient settlements of the Middle Level, March stands on higher ground that was once an island in the marshes, so as you pass under the town bridge the High Street shops are level with the top of the bridge.

St Wendreda's church is a twenty minute walk from the town centre - well worth it according to the late Sir John Betjeman, the Poet Laureate, journalist and architectural critic, who said "It is worth cycling forty miles in a head wind to see". Follow the cycle route signs to the Neale Wade Academy.

Uniquely dedicated to an Anglo Saxon woman who lived at March in the late 7th century and whose shrine became a place of pilgrimage in the late middle ages. The church, until the mid 19th century was the chapelry of Doddington parish and is a mixture of 13th, 14th and 16th century styles - although mainly perpendicular in construction. The chancel is Victorian.

The famous angel roof was built after 1523 when the present clerestory was created, probably from money raised by local guilds capitalising on St Wendreda's shrine. It is of double hammer beam design and was ordered from a workshop in Bacton, Suffolk. The roof has 120 carved angels and most are attached to the hammer beans. Figures depict martyrs and saints with emblems while the lowest tier is of angels holding musical instruments: Amongst all is a "spoiler", a possible green man on one of the triangular spandrels.



Six miles from March is Marmont Priory Lock. Above the lock you pass through the twin villages of Upwell and Outwell in what is one of the most interesting sections of the trip as the village streets line both sides of the navigation and you pass houses, gardens, shops, pubs and churches. Several places have visitor moorings. In the springtime the river banks here are crowded with daffodils.

Outwell Basin is a short stretch of water a little wider than the rest of the navigation where the route turns sharp right. There are visitor moorings here provided by the Well Creek Trust. This was once the junction between the Old River Nene, Well Creek and the Wisbech Canal, which was closed in 1926.

The Wisbech and Upwell Tramway opened to Outwell in 1883, was extended to Upwell in 1884 and closed in 1966. The Reverend Wilbert Awdry, author of the 'Thomas the Tank Engine' books, lived in the area and wrote 'Toby the Tram Engine' based on this line.

Two miles further along Well Creek you cross the Middle Level Main Drain, the waters of which are pumped out to sea by an array of large pumps.

After this you cruise through open countryside and the village of Nordelph before arriving at Salter's Lode Lock.

After you have transversed the tidal reach to Denver you are on the Ely section of the Great Ouse.

Αt Denver there are moorings near the Jenyns Arms. Also from here, if you have time to spare, you can go through the lock into the Relief Channel to visit Downham Market where visitor moorings are provided.

Less than a mile on from Denver is the junction with the River Wissey, which is navigable for 10 miles up to Stoke Ferry, one of the four navigable tributaries of the Great Ouse. You pass two more of these (The Little Ouse or Brandon River, navigable for 13 miles to Brandon Lock and the River Lark navigable for 10 miles to Judes Ferry) as well as the village of Littleport before arriving at Ely.

Ely has a pleasant and busy waterfront with the city centre a short walk away up a steep hill. As well as the magnificent Cathedral there is a fascinating museum to be found at Oliver Cromwell's House, the Ely Museum at the Old Gaol, and a Stained Glass Museum at the cathedral. In addition there is an Antiques Centre close to the river and many shops in the city centre.

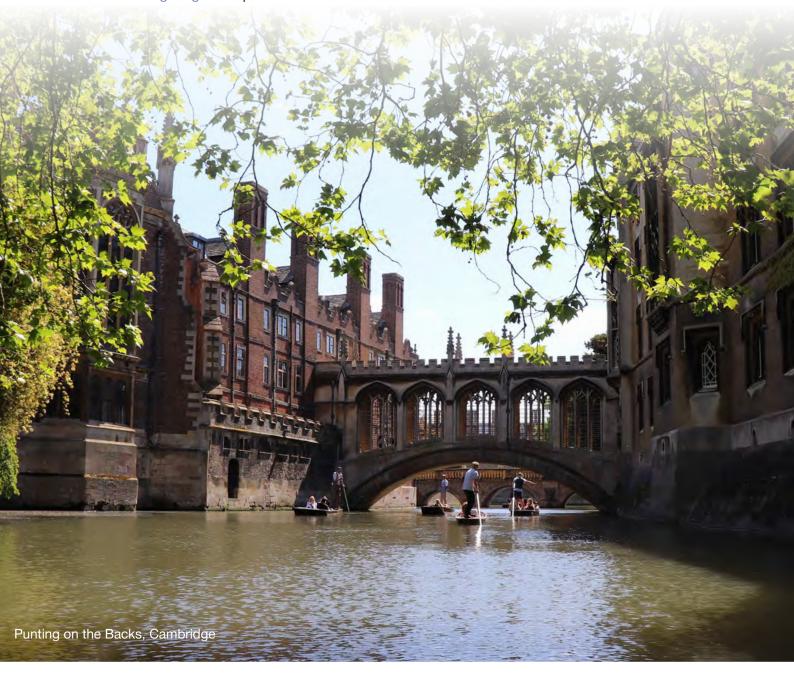


2. Ely to Cambridge

Approx 5 hours cruising each way

Four and a half miles upstream from Ely you arrive at Popes Corner where the Great Ouse turns right to Bedford and straight ahead is the River Cam leading 14 more miles into Cambridge. The name of the Fish & Duck pub here reminds us of the original harvest of the Fens before they were drained 400 years ago. It is over six miles to the electrified, boater operated, Bottisham Lock. On the way you pass the entrance to the short Burwell and Reach lodes at Upware Junction and then Swaffham and Bottisham Lodes. Above the lock we go by the Cam Sailing Club before arriving at Clayhithe Bridge where there are visitor moorings.

Two miles from Clayhithe you come to Bates Bite Lock, another boater operated electric lock, then go under the A14 road bridge and past the village of Fen Ditton. Around this point the usual rule of the river is reversed for the convenience of rowers so look out for the 'Keep Left' notices that mark this section. Once past this it is only two miles to the head of navigation for powered craft at Jesus Green Lock. If you want to go punting above the lock Scudamore's offer a wide range of tour and self-hire punting options. Contact them on 01223 359 750 or via their website at www.scudamores.com For more information on Cambridge see www.visitcambridge.org or telephone 01223 791500.



3. March to Ferry Meadows Country Park

12 hours return trip - ideal for short break

Turning right from our marina along the Old River Nene, this route passes Floods Ferry Marina Park Beyond this is Floods Ferry Junction where the Old Nene forks left and our route turns right down Whittlesey Dyke.

After three miles cruising you approach Angle Corner where to the left Bevill's Leam joins our route and opposite on the right is the entrance to the Twenty Foot River. Continuing straight on you find the dyke narrows as the outskirts of Whittlesey are approached. Ashline Lock (a boater operated manual lock) marks your arrival at this historic market town. Above the lock there are visitor moorings next to the Leisure Centre.

Soon after leaving the Whittlesey moorings there is a bridge on a 90° bend which even an experienced boater must treat with respect. You then pass two of the many pubs in the town before heading through some more open country and travelling beside a deep brick pit. Brick making has long been an industry of the town and much of the area east of Peterborough although, most of the clay pits are now worked out. On the approach to Peterborough the cathedral can be seen clearly visible across the flat fields that lead to Stanground Lock.

A short branch of the River Nene leads from the lock, with Stanground Village on the left and a nature reserve on the right, before you go under the railway bridge that takes you out onto the wide waters of the Nene. Turn left here and you will find visitor moorings along the length of the park which are convenient for the city centre.

As you cruise up river from the centre of Peterborough you will see on the right a series of open spaces and wild areas that form part of the huge Nene Park, occupying some 500 acres of meadows, lakes and woods and runs for around six miles alongside the River Nene.

Stanground Lock

You pass the entrance to the channel that leads to the rowing lake then the sculpture park can be seen.

Two miles up river from Peterborough Bridge is Orton Lock, the first of a series of Guillotine locks that are a feature of the Nene.

The Guillotine gate is electrically operated by boaters but the top mitre doors (gates) must be manually operated. Above the lock are the moorings of the Peterborough Yacht Club and then you come to the entrance to Ferry Meadows Country Park which is on the left, just before the footbridge that crosses the River Nene. A short connecting channel will take you into Overton Lake, one of the many lakes in the park. Head towards the left-hand side of the lake and you will see the pontoons provided for visitor moorings.



Ferry Meadows is the focal point of Nene Park and offers a Caravan Club site, cycle hire, visitor centre, shop, play areas, miniature railway, cycling, walking, kite- flying, pony riding, nature-spotting and fishing, as well as substantial facilities for various water sports at the water sports centre and on its associated ponds and lakes.

Further Afield

The itinerary for your narrowboat holiday is only limited by time and your imagination.

Further route suggestions can be found on our website www.foxboats.co.uk/waterways or ask our expert staff who can guide you in planning your bespoke trip

Things to do on and off your narrowboat



Nene Valley Railway

Nene Valley Railway is the UK's leading international steam attraction, based at Wansford Station, and covering the stations of Overton (for Ferry Meadows), Orton Mere, Yarwell Junction, and Peterborough.

As both a living heritage railway, which is tended to by its loyal band of volunteers and a thriving attraction for the public to enjoy all year round.

Nene Valley Railway offers the chance to experience the thrill of riding a steam engine; learn about the railway's history; and explore the picturesque surroundings of the Nene Valley area.

Wansford Station

Wansford station is the headquarters of the Nene Valley Railway. The station brings together three forms of transport in one location, with the River Nene being separated from the railway by the "Old Great North Road".

Turntable Cafe, Shop and Toilets, disabled and child facilities are also located within the station building, Our Garden railway operates on some running days along with the model railway.

The waiting room on platform two is referred to as "The Barnwell Building" due to it having been moved from Barnwell station to the NVR on April 5th 1977. The building was built in 1884 for use by members of the Royal family when visiting Barnwell Manor, home of HRH Duke of Gloucester.

The Wansford old station building on platform three was built in 1844/5 for the opening of the line. Built in a Jacobean style it features much ornate stone masonry. The NVR has recently acquired this building and will renovate it for use by the NVR and local community.

The signal box was built in 1907 by the London & North Western Railway to replace three smaller boxes. The signal box was originally built with 60 levers and is one of the largest preserved signal boxes in its original location.

The picnic area at Wansford is open all year round. Sitting at one of the picnic tables here you can watch the signalman operating the box at Wansford while the trains pass over the river, bridge and viaduct; It's a great location for taking photographs.

The children's playground is located near to the car park entrance.

Thomas

The Nene Valley Railway is home to a little blue engine named 'Thomas' by the Rev. W. Awdry author of the famous books about Thomas and Friends.

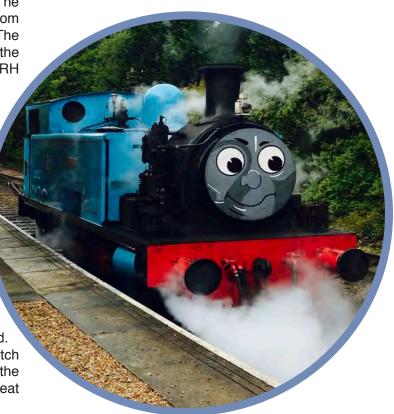
The 0-6-0T engine No. 1800 was built by Hudswell Clarke in 1947 at about the time when Rev.W Awdry wrote his second book in which Thomas appeared.

The little blue engine spent its entire working life at the British Sugar Corporation Peterborough factory, pushing wagons of sugar beet up an incline until the day came when a diesel engine replaced the steam power of Thomas.

The Peterborough Railway Society purchased this delightful little engine on 9th September 1973 and he was moved to the Nene Valley Railway, where he has since delighted his friends and children of all ages.

www.nvr.org.uk

Tel: 01780 784444



Shopping

Peterborough and Cambridge have all the shops and services you would expect in a city but are by no means the only places to shop. Many of our market towns, including March, Whittlesey, Ramsey, Ely, St Ives, Huntingdon, Oundle and Thrapston, offer interesting independent shops as well as

branches of the well known chain stores and supermarkets.

Eating out

For many people a holiday is not complete without taking the occasional (or frequent) break from cooking to enjoy a meal at a pub or restaurant. In addition to the many eating places situated in our towns and villages you will find some attractive waterside pubs with restaurants in more isolated places.

All our narrowboats are equipped with a comprehensive Tourist Information folder with many more suggestions of places to visit, eat and shop along your journey



Wildlife to spot

Spotting Kingfishers

Although everyone has seen pictures of Britain's most flamboyant bird, the shy kingfisher is not easy to spot. Even when they are sitting in a tree or bush on the river bank this brightly coloured bird is surprisingly difficult to see. However, the deck of a boat on Cambridgeshire's waterways is the perfect place to see one.

The best way to see a kingfisher is to look well ahead of the boat to see if one comes out from the bank. At a distance you will not see the bright blue of the plumage but the kingfisher can be recognised by its flight and habits. The kingfisher has small wings that it beats rapidly so at a distance its flight looks more like that of an insect than of a bird. It flies at about two foot from the surface of the water and can often be seen to fly out from the bank ahead of the boat and to land on the bank further ahead.



The kingfisher has its own territory so will not continue to keep ahead of your boat indefinitely. When it reaches the end of its length of river it will do one of three things; either it will perch on a tree or bush and wait for the boat to pass, or it will turn and fly back past the boat, or it will fly away from the bank to fly home across the fields.

The secret of spotting these elusive birds is to keep a careful eye on where they land so that you always know where they are. In this way you can maximise your chance of spotting one at close quarters.

Water Voles

Water voles are one of the key species on drains and other waterways within the Middle Level.



Otters

Otters are one of the country's largest mammals and are perfectly adapted for aquatic conditions. They have webbed feet for swimming and a body length of just over a meter including a tail of about 40 cm. They eat mainly fish and are said to need about 1kg of food very day. They hunt mainly at night over very large territories, which can often extend along 20km of rivers.

Herons

The Grey Heron is a patient bird, using the act of standing still as a foraging technique, maintaining position passively, hoping that a fish, or frog or small mammal will appear at their feet.



Herons can be spotted in rural areas as you meander between locations.

Your questions answered

What do I need to bring with me?

The boats come comprehensively equipped for your holiday. Really all you need to bring is clothing and food. It is best to have rubber soled shoes for working the boat, and you should bring some wet weather gear, in case of inclement weather.

Are the narrow boats centrally heated?

Yes, all our boats are centrally heated. There are hot water tanks on the boats as well so that you can have a shower at any time.

Can I fish from the narrow boat?

Fishing is allowed provided that you have a current E.A. rod licence. Most clubs will not object to you fishing from the boat, but some may require you to purchase a day ticket.

Will there be enough fuel on the narrow boat?

Yes, you will take over your boat fully fuelled for all but the longest of holidays, all included in your holiday cost. For extended journeys of 14 days or more you will be given details of refuelling arrangements during your handover.

How do I get water?

There are water points along the waterway, normally at least every 4 – 6 hours cruising. Always try fill up with water at least once a day. Remember you are not connected to the mains!

Will children enjoy a narrow boat holiday?

Yes, in fact if they are 10+ they will probably take over! They just love to drive the boats, under supervision of course (and where else could they do that?) If you have active children try the river Nene with plenty of locks and open countryside. It is very rare for children to get bored since there is always something for them to do.

Can I bring my pet with me?

Yes, your faithful companion will be most welcome on board subject to a small additional charge.













Do I need a licence to drive a narrow boat?

No. You will be fully trained as part of the handover routine in how to drive the narrowboat, use all the onboard equipment and operate the locks by one of our qualified instructors. Your instructor will not let you commence your narrowboat holiday until you and they are fully confident in you being able to handle the narrowboat. The show round and training takes around an hour at the start of your holiday.

Can I charge a mobile phone and tablets on the narrow boat?

Yes, all of our boats have in-car charger sockets, USB charging ports and 240v power supplies.

How likely is it that I will get lost?

Unlikely, but we would recommend that you buy a guide for your route either when you book, or at the Hire Base before you set out. They are not only useful for your route, but also for pinpointing pubs, shops and local points of interest. If you are uncertain when you get to a particular junction, just ask.

Remember the locals are friendly. We have never lost a boat vet!

The free Open Canal Map app, available on iPhone & Android is worth downloading before your holiday: this shows your exact position on the waterways map along with other useful information like water points, locks and moorings.

Can I park my car at the base?

Yes there is plenty of car parking at our base, which is free to our customers for the duration of their holiday. We regret that we are unable to accept responsibility for loss or damage to customers' vehicles.

What happens if I have to cancel the holiday?

You are advised to take out cancellation Insurance Cover to protect you in the case of cancellation.

Is WiFi available on my boat?

Yes, WiFi is included in all our holidays, subject to a (generous) data limit and fair usage policy. Coverage can be intermittent in more remote areas of your journey

www.foxboats.co.uk

