

For anyone thinking about living on a canal boat in London, this is just about everything I know on the subject.

First – You do not need to know all of this before moving onto a boat. There is a LOT of information here. We knew a bit of it, and we learned the rest along the way. Most of this information is useful, but it's probably overwhelming.

Second – I am not an expert. I did live on a houseboat in London for a time, but there's a lot I still don't know.

Essentials

Every boat is different, learn about yours.

Follow CRT (Canal and River Trust) rules.

Join London Boaters on Facebook.

Don't completely fuck up your batteries.

Stock up on wood and coal in the winter.

If you need help with something, ask more experienced boaters or post in London Boaters. Don't be a dick.

Have fun.

This is my experience with London boat life:

My main piece of advice to people thinking about living on a boat is: DO IT, but be aware of what you're getting yourself into. Boat life can be absolutely incredible, but it is a bigger responsibility than living in a flat. If you've got the time and the taste for the lifestyle, it's more than worth it.

Side note: When I lived on a boat, according to the Home Office, I was the only foreign citizen in the UK on a Tier-4 student visa living on a houseboat. I might have been the first one ever, at least as a continuous cruiser (more on this later). That's irrelevant, but it makes me feel cool.

Background: I lived on a 65-foot narrowboat for 4 ½ months, from 1st August to 17th December, 2016. Not long, I know, but I've experienced all manner of London weather on a boat, moored in 14 different places, and have much more experienced boater friends who've taught me a lot. I rented the boat with one other person, and we had a couple of other friends stay for various lengths of time. I am not an expert on boats and I know nothing about boat mechanics.

Living on a boat was one of the best experiences of my life. It is not the easiest or most practical way to live. I would do it again in a heartbeat, but there's a lot I've learned from my boat experience that I wish I'd known when I first started.

General Pros and Cons of Boat Life

I feel similarly towards boat life as I do towards the country of Ireland: Sometimes a bit shit, but on the whole, magical.

Pros

- 1) **Conscious living:** If you're interested in tapping into your basic necessities in a way that your average flat in 21st century London does not allow you to, boat life may be for you. There can be something really satisfying in consciously thinking about your warmth, your water, your power, your space, your location.
- 2) **Sustainable living:** On a boat you have to be so aware of your water and your power usage that it's on the whole a pretty sustainable way to live. Especially because on many boats your power comes from solar panels. But – burning coal and diesel engine = not great for the environment.
- 3) **Cheaper:** On average, buying a boat is a hell of a lot cheaper than buying a flat. Renting a boat is still cheaper than renting a flat for where you get to live.
- 4) **Beautiful:** Have you walked down the canal through Victoria Park in the summer? Or any other time of year for that matter? You get me. Yes, the water is dirty, but your morning view from the deck is of ducklings and swans and trees and calm water and not some random brick building with a pub in Bethnal Green.
- 5) **Nomadic lifestyle:** If you're a continuous cruiser, you move every couple of weeks and get to explore all different parts of London. And the canals go everywhere in England and I think throughout the rest of Britain, so you can moor all over the place.
- 6) **Great parts of London:** Everywhere I lived on a boat was between Kensal Rise and Bow, then up through Hackney Wick to Clapton. Most of the locations were between Broadway Market and Little Venice.
- 7) **Boater community:** It's kind of a big family. London Boaters is the Facebook group, it's dead useful for asking questions and getting answers. On the canals, you tend to meet your neighbors a lot more than you do in a flat or house. They tend to be cool people *on the whole*. This does not go for everyone. I've made some incredible friends through boat life.
- 8) **Deck/roof:** When the weather's nice (or at least decent)? Oh Lordy, the roof. Put a yoga mat on your roof and cover yourself in coconut oil and sunbathe all day. Drink wine on your deck with your friends. Bring guitars and sing along under the stars. Especially if you're cruising somewhere pretty. It's wonderful.
- 9) **Off the grid:** Fuck the establishment, man! Get off the grid!

Cons

- 1) **The heat situation:** England gets cold in the winter. On a boat, you have to build a fire for warmth. You also have to run your engine for hot water. It can be frustrating.
- 2) **The toilet situation:** If pumping out or emptying plastic boxes of your own waste is not something you can tolerate, boat life might be taxing on the poo-poo front. It really isn't bad, at least I didn't think so. But, the Elsan dump spots along the canal are, on the whole, pretty grim. Fortunately, you don't have to spend more than 5 minutes in them at a time.
- 3) **The power situation:** If you don't watch your battery, you can fuck your power quite easily. This happened to us, I know it happens to a lot of newbie boaters. You can't use power as freely as you would on the grid.

- 4) **Internet:** If you don't have a phone you can tether to your laptop through that wifi hotspot situation (I didn't), no wifi for you. I used data on my phone and went to friends' places and cafés when I needed wifi.
- 5) **Boating is a responsibility:** Heating your boat, moving your boat, running your engine to charge batteries/heat water, getting water, emptying your toilet, being aware of/conserving your battery power, etc. It does take time and energy.

Types of Boats

Narrowboat: Narrowboats are your kind of standard canal boat. They are 7-feet wide (2.13 m). They come in varying lengths, most I've seen as actual homes are 20-72 feet (6.1-22 m). They do feel a bit narrow on the inside, but not uncomfortably so. They are much more comfortable to live in for one person or a couple because you can really only put one bedroom in them. If you're living with other people and not sharing a bedroom, it's less comfortable. They are, however, easier to moor.

Wide-beam: From my understanding, pretty much a boat wider than a narrowboat? I've seen them go from about 9-13 feet wide (2.7-3.9 m). I haven't seen a really short wide-beam, most I've seen are at least around 40 feet long (12 m). Again, I don't think you can go over 72 feet (22 m) because of getting through locks. They are harder to moor because you can't double-moor as easily, because they're wider. Some people on narrowboats dislike wide-beams, apparently. I don't mind either way.

Other: You see some funky stuff on the canals. Submarine-type situations, random cobbled-together boats, little plastic saily-type boats, etc. But most of the boats are of the traditional houseboat variety.

Basic Terminology

- 1) **Houseboat/Canal boat/Boat** – From my understanding there's not one set term for the thing that you live on. We usually just called it the boat.
- 2) **Cruising** – “Driving” your boat. Some people call it sailing. Moving the boat up and down the canal/river.
- 3) **Moor** – To dock/park/whatever. To tie your boat up somewhere and chill there. A spot where you moor is called a mooring. I've never heard anyone say dock in terms of London boats. You'll look like a noob.
- 4) **Residential mooring** – An officially-rented mooring spot. There are basins and marinas along the canal that have residential moorings in them. From what I gather, they're expensive (we're talking £1000+/month in central London). I think there are places to charge your electric and stuff on-grid at residential moorings, so they have their uses. Plus, you don't have to keep moving your boat. But I like moving, so...
- 5) **Continuous Cruiser** – In the UK, a boater who doesn't live at a residential mooring. You move between visitor moorings, most of which are 14 days (some are 7 days). If you don't leave within those 14 (or 7) days, you will get fined. I think the fine is £25/day. Unlike residential moorings, which you actually rent, visitor moorings are free! But they

are a first-come first-serve thing. In more popular spots in central London, they can be quite full, but we never had a problem finding space and our boat was quite long.

- 6) **CRT** – The Canal and River Trust. The popo, ho. The fuzz. The branch of UK government that deals with rules and regulations on canals and rivers. They're strict. They're on their shit. Try not to piss them off.
- 7) **Towpath** – The path that runs along the canal.
- 8) **Double-mooring (and triple-mooring)**: Mooring up next to someone. So someone's boat is moored against the towpath, you can moor your boat next to their boat. Occasionally you see boats triple-moored, but it's not as common and kind of frowned-upon from what I gather.
- 9) **Locks**: Those big gates that open and shut and fill up with water when the canal changes elevation.

Money: Basically, boating is cheaper than living in central London, but there are costs to be aware of.

Buying: Living-sized boats (let's say a narrowboat of at least 20ft length to a wide-beam of 50ft length) tend to run from like £10,000 to 85,000 or so I've never bought a boat. Your average narrowboat is probably gonna run you about £25,000. I've heard it's cheaper to buy outside London and cruise down the canal/river network into London.

Renting: Depending on who's renting the boat, how big it is, how new it is, etc., you can pay all different amounts to rent a boat. I've heard of them going from £200/mo to £1000/mo. If you're looking to rent a boat, there are the occasional few listings on Gumtree (that's how we found ours). If you've got friends with boats, talk to them. Beware: The boat rental situation is a bit sketchy, legally-speaking.

Utilities: Wood and coal are your biggest investment in the winter. You don't need them in the summer unless you really feel like lighting a fire while it's hot out. Trust me, you'll be warm enough. Diesel cost us about £75 to fill up our whole tank (which lasts a few months). Water is free. Power comes from solar panels, usually, and running your engine, so aside from what you pay for diesel, power is also free (unless you destroy your battery and have to replace it.)

Residential moorings: As mentioned above, they're gnarly expensive. If you're paying for a residential mooring in, say, King's Cross, you might as well just pay for a flat.

Legal Stuff: Follow CRT rules. Learn more about licensing than I know about it. Renting boats is kind of on the down-low, but it does exist. (I definitely don't know a lot about the legality of boats).

Licensing: Every boat has a license that the boat-user (usually owner) pays. I don't know a lot about boat licensing. You do not need any special driving/boating license to cruise/drive/sail a boat on the canal. If you buy your boat and live on it, you do have to pay a licensing fee. The license allows the CRT to know whose boat that is and who to fine/contact in case of any rule breaking or disaster, etc.

Renting: From what I gather, renting a boat is kind of sketchy if you're a continuous cruiser. Some boaters don't like people who are renting. I don't think you're legally *supposed* to rent a boat as a continuous cruiser, but it definitely happens. We did it. We aren't the only ones. I don't know what the CRT thinks is going down with people who own more than one boat in London, but I maybe wouldn't go posting in London Boaters or asking the CRT about renting a boat. If you're renting, sign a contract and obey it.

Life On Your Boat

Every boat is different. You do need to be more aware of what you consume in terms of power and water. Stock up on wood and coal for the winter, it will be cold.

Power: You don't have as power as you would in a flat, so use it wisely. I don't know anything about how power works. Just general advice.

- 1) **Battery:** Your boat has a battery. It gives you power. Keep it charged. Don't let it drop below 12 (you'll know what I mean if you get a boat).
- 2) **Generators:** We didn't have one. I know nothing about them.
- 3) **Solar panels:** Our boat had solar panels which charged our batteries. They're way more efficient in the summer because, duh, more sunlight. Try not to moor under dense foliage, keep your solar panels clear of fallen leaves and other obstructions.
- 4) **Inverter:** The thing that changes your power from 12 Volt to 240 Volt. It can drain your battery. Don't leave it on if you're not using it.
- 5) **Engine:** Running your engine charges your battery or something. We often forgot to do it.

Water: Free water along the canal, *whee!* Stock up when you go by a water point. Also if you have a gym membership or shower at your office, shower there when you can.

- 1) **Hot water:** You run your engine to get hot water. More details in the Heating section below.
- 2) **Filling up:** There are taps along the canal. They're free to use. Fill up your tank when you pass one.
- 3) **Water usage:** Don't just leave your water running. Don't leave the tap going when you're brushing your teeth, don't waste water. You'll run out, it'll suck.

Toilets: Off-grid toilets come in a few shapes and sizes, but yes, you will deal with your own waste in a way you don't in a flat with normal plumbing. My advice: Ask Gerard Pitt about toilets, he has many strong opinions on the subject. Don't steal his dream toilet idea.

Types of toilets

- 1) **Cassette toilet:** This is what we had. Basically, a camping toilet. There's a plastic seat bit and plastic box ("cassette") underneath that your poo and urine dump into. In the top bit, there's a tank with water and poo-dissolving solvent. We were told by our landlord to use bleach as poo-dissolving solvent. We have since been told by other boaters that you do not use bleach and you need to get like blue (green?) portable loo toilet stuff. You empty your cassettes at the Elsan dump spots at certain points along the canal (Victoria Park, St.

Pancras, Little Venice, etc.) **YOU DO NOT DUMP THEM IN THE CANAL.** I recommend having more than one cassette so you can change them out in case you fill up your toilet before getting to an Elsan point.

- 2) **Pump-out toilet:** Bigger tank, it pumps it out through a big hose at a pump out spot, no idea how it works. Apparently, you can smell it a bit, but I never noticed on anyone else's boat.
- 3) **Composting toilet:** They exist. I don't know anything about them.

Emptying your toilet

- 1) **Elsan points:** Got a cassette toilet? You get to experience the wonderful world of Elsan points. They're along the canal in various locations. You remove the top seat part of your toilet, you carry the very heavy (and SEALED) cassette full of waste to the dump spot, you dump it, you flush the flush thing, you rinse out your cassette, and you use it again.
- 2) **Pump-out spots** – There are fewer along the canal, but your pump-out toilet tank is larger. I don't know much about them, except they involve a big thick hose.
- 3) Advice:
 - a. When dumping your cassette, wear rubber gloves.
 - b. When moving your cassette from the bathroom to the deck/Elsan point, make absolutely certain it is sealed.
 - c. If you're sensitive to smells, hold your breath at the Elsan points and breathe through your mouth, especially the one in Little Venice, as it is indoors and smells exactly like you'd expect it to.
 - d. Don't overfill your cassette. It's a plastic box full of poo and urine. If you overfill it, there's nowhere for it to go but all over your bathroom.
 - e. Dumping toilets is really *not that grim*. Yes, Elsan points smell and if you fuck up, you can get in a *shitty* situation. But if you're on top of it and careful, it's fine.

Fuel: Canal boats have diesel engines. Johnny the Diesel Guy will deliver you diesel. Filling up our whole tank cost about £75 and lasts several months. We never had to replace our gas the whole time we lived there, but your stove is probably a gas one (unless you've got a wood-burning stove you can cook on top of).

Food storage: If you have a fridge, only use it in the summer.

We didn't have a fridge when we moved in. Our friend bought us a little low-energy one, but even that drains the battery in the winter. In the winter, it's cold enough that you can often leave food out or in an ice-box type situation. I've been told leaving food in a container on the floor in a spot far from the fire is good for keeping it cold. Don't leave unsealed food containers or rubbish bins out unless you really want to attract rodents/foxes/etc.

Technology: For wifi, use a mobile hotspot. Don't bother with a TV unless it's really essential, but no, you won't have cable. Also, cafés and friends' places with wifi and TVs are cool.

- 1) **Charging things:** You will have wall sockets, you have to switch your power to 240 V to use them, it'll use your battery a lot. Charging Mac laptops uses more battery power than you want it to.

- 2) **Wifi:** No, you can't get wifi the normal way. Yes, I asked about every possible option at Carphone Warehouse. However, mobile hotspot (tethering your phone) is a thing. I had a pay-as-you-go O2 phone, so I couldn't do that. I just got a big bundle with loads of data and used my phone for internet and used wifi in cafés/friends' places. On rare occasions you'll pick up wifi networks along the canal, (like the BTInternet ones). They work, if you can get a log-in, but they're not very strong from my experience.
- 3) **TVs:** No, I'm pretty sure you can't get cable either. We had a little TV that played DVDs, it was actually quite nice. Loads of charity shops have cheap DVDs, think sitting by the fire, drinking tea and watching old films, it's old school. TVs don't run on 12 V battery, you have to use your inverter to switch to 240 V, it will eat up your battery but the TV wasn't our problem.
- 4) **Other:** Our boat had in-the-wall USB chargers and a built in speaker system. That was cool. I don't know any other boats with that, though, but it can be done.

Rubbish: Little bin bags you can toss in the bins along the towpath. For big ones, there are dumpsters at various spots along the canal. Don't leave bin bags on your deck for a long time (see note on rodents and foxes above).

Heating: It will be cold in the winter. Stock up on fire-making supplies. Get a hot water bottle and a pair of fuzzy slippers/thick socks. Fire = Boat TV.

For far too much detail on heating, read below:

I'd say, this was far and away the biggest issue for us. You do not have normal central heating on a boat. Maybe there's some magical new modern boats that have some kind of heating system involving back boilers (don't ask, I don't know what they are either). No idea. But for the most part, you light a fire to heat your boat. You light it in a wood-burning stove situation, it's really cozy and nice, but you do need to stay on top of it.

Boats are insulated to varying degrees. In the summer, they can get really warm on the inside and incredibly hot on the outside (think metal painted dark blue in the sun in August. Yeah. Hot). In the winter, they can get mighty cold.

Learn to build a fire, it's a useful skill to have for survival in general. If you can't be asked, invest in firelighters and kindling.

So, **on fires:**

- 1) **Wood and coal:** Stock up. There are wood and coal guys who sell in bulk and come up and down the canal. Ask fellow boaters or the London Boaters Facebook group, they'll hook you up with the people to talk to. If you're moored near a park/wooded area, you can pick up logs and sticks. Sawing and chopping is work, but it's fun. *Stay the fuck on top of your wood and coal.* If you run out and it's midnight and freezing and all the shops nearby that sell wood/coal are shut? Yeah. It sucks. Also, coal takes much longer to light but burns for much longer. I'd light a wood fire, throw coal on it, let the coal heat up, keep it stoked with wood, and let the coal burn overnight. Your boat will be fairly cold on winter mornings pretty much no matter what.

- 2) **Kindling and firelighters:** They're your friends. Kindling can be picked up from parks and natural areas or bought at shops (some off-licenses, a lot of Poundlands). Newspaper is good for starting fires. Firelighters (little bricks that light instantly and burn long enough to set a fire) are your friends. Instant start logs are cool too, they usually last an hour or so, but I don't think they're super good for you to breathe, maybe.

Where to get things

- 1) **Wood and coal guys:** We stupidly never used them. They work on the canals and do deliveries. It's cheaper and you can buy in bulk. Ask London Boaters/boater friends for their info.
- 2) **Nature:** Get a saw, get an ax, don't go chopping down trees, but collect fallen branches and logs and chop them up. It's a bit of effort, but it's free. Also dumpsters are a great spot to find free wood.
- 3) **Poundland:** For smaller bags of coal, instant start logs, firelighters, kindling. Different Poundlands have different stuff. The one in Hoxton does not have everything you want it to
- 4) **Big grocery stores:** The big Sainsbury's in Kensal Rise (which is right on the canal and you can moor next to it for a couple hours) and the one in Angel all have loads of fire-making supplies. They are more expensive.
- 5) **Off-licenses:** Again, each one has different stuff, generally more expensive than you want it to be. Charcoal is not the same as coal.

When to light your fire: Depending on the size of your fire, size of your stove, and size/layout of your boat, it'll take a little while for things to warm up after you set your fire. Generally, it took ours at least a half hour or so. If you keep the fire stoked and going for a while, your boat can get properly hot and toasty. I know at least some boaters will get home from work, set a fire, leave for the evening and come back to a warm boat. Leaving an unattended fire in your boat is not super dangerous if you've got a stove that locks, but it freaks me out and I only ever did it for like 10 minutes at a time. Maybe I'm just paranoid.

Don't burn down your boat or other people's boats.

The damp thing: Boats get damp, especially in the winter. Not like dripping wet on the inside, but the air will be kind of moist a lot of the time. It sucks a bit in the winter.

Hot water: For most (all?) boats, you run your engine to get hot water. For doing dishes, showering, etc., you generally run your engine for about half an hour before the water gets hot. Depending on the boat, it will stay hotter for various lengths of time after you turn off the engine. FYI, you can't run your engine after 20:00 unless you're cruising.

Other advice on warmth: Thick socks, dressing gowns and fuzzy slippers are your friends. Get a good, thick duvet or 12. And A HOT WATER BOTTLE.

Life on the Canal

- 1) **CRT Rules**

- a. **Moorings:** Most visitor moorings are 2 weeks. Some are 1 week. You'll see signs on the towpath letting you know each one. You cannot moor everywhere – there are sets of moorings at different points along the canal. You can double moor, it's fine. Triple mooring is kind of sketchy territory.
- b. **Power and noise:** Engines can only be run between 8AM and 8PM unless you're cruising your boat (I think the same goes for generators, but we didn't have one). Generally, don't cruise late at night unless you have to; it's kind of rude because you will make noise and create a current that moves other boats around.
- c. **Cruising patterns:** You'll hear this term a lot. From what I gather, the CRT is a bit unclear about what a legal cruising pattern is and there are as many understandings of how cruising patterns work as there are boaters. What I do know:

- You have to cruise 20 miles in a year in a regular cruising pattern.

- A regular cruising pattern means basically, a regular pattern to your cruising. Like, you can't spend 2 weeks at each mooring between Victoria Park and Little Venice, go out to Uxbridge for 2 days, and call that 20 miles. It has to be a fairly normal pattern, like 1-2 weeks in different spots regularly for a full 20-mile stretch.

- Don't overstay in visitor moorings (you will get fined).

- When you reach the end of your navigation (ie. the 20 miles covered), it's unclear whether you can turn around and go back right away to the spot you were just in. Some boaters say yes, other say no.

- There's this whole 3-month rule I'm unclear on. Our landlord (river-lord) said you absolutely cannot moor in a spot if you've moored there within the last 3 months. You can stop there for a couple hours or a night, but not for a week or two.

For more information, see the CRT website (in Resources, below).

2) **Locks:** You can sink your boat in a lock. Don't do it. Keep ahead of the fucking cill marker. Be wary, be careful, take them slow, go through them with someone who's done them before for your first several times. I've found them much easier to do with more than one person. If there's traffic, wait your turn, don't be a dick, etc.

3) **Moorings:** Look at the signs and don't overstay.

Rings and pins: Most mooring spots in central London are on rings. They're, well, metal rings on the ground, and you tie your boat to them. See a stretch of canal with no rings and no boats around? You probably can't moor there. If you're mooring along grass, ie. Hackney Wick, Kensal Rise, etc., you'll hammer in mooring pins and tie your boat off to those.

Double mooring: If you don't need to do it, don't do it, unless it's like your BFF next door. In most of central London, you do need to do it. Further out, not so much. We were told, as a general rule, don't double moor onto someone moored on pins. Most of the places that need pins are further out and won't be as crowded anyway.

- 4) **Cruising:** It's fun and lovely, unless it's freezing out and pissing down rain.

Cruising/sailing a houseboat is really not hard to pick up. You move the tiller back and forth, the boat moves back and forth. Don't go too fast, take it slow and easy around turns, watch out for traffic, don't be a dick. If you're leaving a big wake, you're going too fast. Also – On the canals, you drive on the right hand side. It's not like car driving in the UK. If you're passing a boat, pass on the right.

Houseboats are slow. You're pretty much cruising at a walking pace. This means when moving between moorings, give yourself AT LEAST as much time to cruise as it would take to walk it. Tack on extra time for mooring and if you're going through any locks. If you're cruising through Camden, loads of extra time. There are 3 back-to-back locks in Camden.

You don't need a special license.

Don't cruise drunk/fucked up, obviously.

- 5) **Boater Community:** Boaters are (in general) awesome! Some of my favorite people I've met in London have been through boating. This is not a hard and fast rule, but I would say that in general, shitty people don't live on boats. The canals are very neighborly and you get to know your neighbors a lot, if for no other reason than that you literally walk over their house sometimes to get to the towpath.

6) **London Canal network**

Grand Union Canal: Starts in London, runs up to Birmingham and all over Britain. When looking on the canal route planning website (in resources below), this is the name of the canal you're on in most of London. Regent's Canal is a section of it.

Regent's Canal: The canal bit in most of central London. It runs from Little Venice to Limehouse through Paddington, Regent's Park, Camden, King's Cross, Angel, Haggerston, Broadway Market, Bethnal Green, Mile End down to Limehouse and into the Thames.

Hertford Union: So the canal splits in Victoria Park. Regent's Canal runs down through Mile End towards Limehouse, Hertford Union is this little stretch up the Bow side of Victoria Park. It feeds into the River Lea around Hackney Wick.

River Lea (Lee?): River that runs from somewhere north down through Tottenham, Clapton, Hackney Marshes, Hackney Wick into Olympic Park, Bow and I think Limehouse from there. I've seen it spelled River Lee and River Lea, fuck knows. The Lee Navigation according to Wikipedia is like the canal bit in East London and then the River Lea is like the full river.

Others: Limehouse Cut, whatever happens down in Bow, there are others, but the above were all I really dealt with.

- 7) **Canal Overcrowding/Issues:** The London canals were not built to house as many people as are currently living on the canals. Actually, I'm pretty sure they weren't originally built to house anybody. Visitor moorings, especially in central London, are getting more crowded. The CRT has tightened rules on mooring and cruising. Those rules are kind of unclear, but stated as best as I can gather above.

Other General Life Stuff

- 1) **Address:** If you're a continuous cruiser, you don't have an address. You can get mail sent to loads of places. Friends, parents, post boxes, and Amazon has some kind of pick-up mail holding spot I hear? If you're a foreign student in the UK on a Tier 4 visa, you have to email your uni or the Home Office whenever you change location to let them know where you live now.
- 2) **Laundry:** Launderettes are your friend. The one in King's Cross is mega cheap for a full service wash.
- 3) **Non-Boaters:** It's been said that people who live in flats along the canal don't like boaters. I've never had a problem with anyone, but there are well-known complainers, I think in Angel. Kids (and people in general) are occasionally dickheads (we had some kids come and bang on our boat once at like 8 in the morning and I had to go out and yell at them.) Also, if you're picking up guys at a bar and fail to mention until you're in the Uber to your boat that you actually live on a boat and that's not a joke, and then it's 4:00 am, you're moored by the trees in Hackney Wick and you don't have any wood so you have to run into the trees, grab a bunch of logs, and start sawing, it may freak them out.
- 4) **Transportation:** Most spots along the canal are fairly close to a tube or overground stop, but what line you're close to will change as you move. I'd get a bike, the canals are great places to cycle.
- 5) **Safety:** Honestly, I never once had a problem with safety, not even at night. This is not everyone's experience, I'm sure, but I didn't find the canal to be any more dangerous than anywhere else in London. There are plenty of people who live alone on boats, including women, and haven't had a problem.
- 6) **Fancy a Swim?** Don't swim in the canal. The water is gross. Keep cork on your keys so they float if they fall in. Invariably, you or something you own will fall in, I almost guarantee it. Invest in a net or boat hook to fish stuff out in case it's valuable/essential.

General Do's and Don'ts

- Don't be a dick.
- Don't speed on the canal, especially going around bends (ie. Primrose Hill) or in areas with other boats moored. It's kind of a dick move.

- Don't move your boat late at night. It's loud, it makes a current that moves other boats around. It's, once again, kind of a dick move. Sometimes it's unavoidable.
- Don't triple moor, especially in winter. It's a safety thing I think. People lighting fires, if a boat catches fire, harder to evacuate.
- Don't moor obnoxiously in general.
- This one is up in the air, but I would say: don't move other people's boats without their permission if you can possibly avoid it. Let's say there's 40 feet of mooring space but it's in 20-foot chunks with a boat in the middle. Ask the person in that boat if you can move it. If they're not in, move it up and leave a note, and know they might be annoyed. If you move someone's boat, MAKE SURE you tie them off well.
- Do follow CRT rules, whatever the hell they are.
- Talk to your neighbors!
- Join London Boaters on Facebook.

Resources

[London Boaters Facebook Group](#)

[CRT Website](#)

[CRT London Waterways Page](#)

[Canal Route Planner](#)

This [article on London boat life](#) which is interesting, useful, and that blue boat in the 2nd photo was ours (that was before we moved in though.)

In conclusion, hope you enjoyed that unnecessary barrage of information. Happy boating, kiddos.

P.S. If you see a long blue narrowboat called Enigma, make sure she's being taken good care of.