

So you want to live on a boat?



There are many things to consider before you decide to live on the water...



Canal &
River Trust



Residential Boat Owners' Association



ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY

These are just some of the things you need to think about:

Why do you want to live on a boat?

You may have experienced the inland waterways on holiday or on a day out - enjoying the view of gaily painted boats, talking to people on board and thinking it would be a wonderful way of life. Or you may have seen TV programmes or newspaper articles about this lifestyle, usually describing top of the range boats in glorious summer weather. But many boats are built to a far more basic fit-out and the chores of emptying the toilet and filling up the water tank in wet and freezing winter conditions are far less attractive.

How much does it cost to live on a boat?

If the most important issue to you is whether it is cheaper than living in a house, then we suggest that you think about it again. Cost is obviously a consideration, but it is equally important to have an affinity with the inland waterways, their culture, heritage and environment. There is as much variation in the cost of living as with any other lifestyle. It can depend on the type of boat and how you are purchasing it, your cruising pattern or mooring location and facilities required, plus the fuel and other services that you will need. Of course, because boats normally have less space than houses, you should use less power and whilst on the move, you can produce electricity and sometimes hot water from the engine.

What about a mooring?

This is probably the main consideration before taking up a life afloat. If you are fortunate enough not to be tied to one area, you may not need a permanent mooring and you can undertake 'continuous cruising' within the requirements set out by the navigation authority. However if you need to be based in one area, for instance for work or school, then we advise you to find a suitable mooring. This can be a big problem in some areas, particularly London and the south east, where moorings are in short supply and if available, can be very expensive.

What other issues will I need to consider?

You will need a current registration or licence from the relevant navigation authority, depending on where you wish to use your boat. Many everyday matters in life today tend to be based on living in a house with a fixed address, so you will find some inconveniences. These can all be resolved but need thinking about. Many live-aboards retain a land base to resolve matters such as delivery of post and this can be used to register on the electoral role. Depending on your mooring situation you may be liable to pay Council Tax and the RBOA can advise on this and many other concerns, such as doctors and obtaining prescriptions.

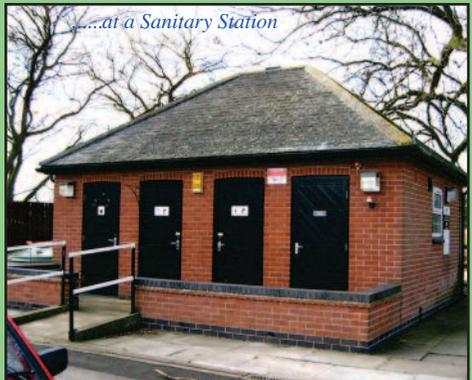
So what should I do next?

We suggest that you try out living afloat. A holiday hire boat can be very different from a residential boat, but will give you some idea of the restricted space aboard and whether you really enjoy cruising and working the locks. Talk to as many people as possible - waterways folk are always happy to share their boating experiences and boatbuilders their knowledge of suitable craft. Waterways magazines are a good source of information on boats for sale, both new and second hand. CRT/EA can provide information on marinas in a particular area but they may not have approval and facilities for residential use, so it is best to travel around and discuss your requirements with the marina operators. The RBOA is a friendly organisation always prepared to help on the many issues associated with living afloat and membership will give you continued advice and other advantages.

There are two sides to everything and living on a boat is no different



What may seem idyllic in summer can be very different in the winter!



Services and facilities are available, but for some things
you still need to be self-sufficient.



You may be lucky enough to get an idyllic country mooring,
but many moorings are in urban areas.

This leaflet has been produced by the Residential Boat Owners' Association (RBOA), a voluntary organisation formed to represent people living afloat on canals, rivers and coastal estuaries; Canal & River Trust (CRT) the public corporation which runs 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across Britain; and the Environment Agency (EA) which manages over 600 miles of navigable rivers in England and Wales.

It is essential that anyone considering living on a boat should research the lifestyle very carefully before 'taking the plunge'. Your checklist should include:

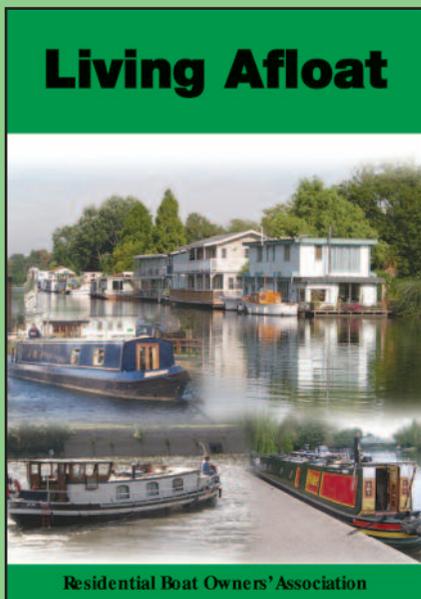
- A mooring
- A registration/licence
- Insurance
- Boat Safety Certificate (similar to an MOT for a car and required every four years)
- Utilities and heating costs
- The cost of regular maintenance of the engine, fittings and hull
- A contract for the purchase of a new boat with stage payments
- A survey which is recommended before purchasing a second hand boat

For more information contact:

Canal & River Trust Customer Services Centre
Tel 03030 404040
www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/boating

Boat Safety Scheme (BSS)
Tel 0333 202 1000
www.boatsafetyscheme.com

The Environment Agency
Tel 03708 506 506
www.environment-agency.gov.uk



Residential Boat Owners' Association
www.rboa.org.uk

The RBOA publishes a book called *Living Afloat*. Written by live-aboard boaters, this 96-page book is designed to help prospective live-aboards decide whether living on a boat would really suit them. It also gives advice on how to select the most suitable boat for your specific needs.

Living Afloat costs £8.00. It is available from many marinas and boat yards or visit our website for details.