

SAFETY FIRST

You should wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) in the shape of a life jacket or buoyancy aid unless you are sure you don't need to. You can base this decision on factors such as weather conditions, the type of activity you are doing and your level of experience. If you are a beginner or still relatively inexperienced, making these judgements is often not that easy, so if this is the case, wear one on deck at all times. For children, wearing the appropriate type of PFD is the responsibility of the adult whose care they are in, and additionally is compulsory under the rules of all sail/paddle training centres and boating clubs around the Broads. Children should wear a PFD at all times other than when down below in the cabin.

Wearing life jackets and buoyancy aids does save lives, and is especially important on the Broads where the tide runs fast, at Great Yarmouth and downstream of Reedham, St. Olaves and Stokesby. The highest risks are when mooring, on cruisers lowering or raising the mud weight, and when getting on and off a boat especially if using a dinghy or tender. On these occasions, PFDs are really essential.

Care at bridges. It will often be necessary to lower canopies and masts, which is often best done whilst moored up. Special care needs to be taken to avoid injuries from the moving parts when they are lowered (or raised) and any advice in the boat operating manual should be taken.

Always ensure sufficient height clearance and ensure that everyone on board is inboard with heads, arms etc. safely positioned to avoid striking the bridge.

At narrow bridges special care is needed to avoid collision and a boat heading into the tide should keep clear of one navigating with the tide.

Care when mooring up. Mooring, and un-mooring, can be hazardous, especially in areas with strong tides and on windy days. Always approach moorings slowly up-stream if possible and/or into the wind. Have mooring lines ready and check that they are free from knots and tangles, ensure that those assisting with mooring operations know the intentions of the skipper. Life jackets should be worn and care taken getting on and off the boat, avoiding jumping.

Care is needed handling the mooring lines and securing them so as to avoid injury from the lines. Always try to approach moorings against the tidal flow and wind so as to assist with the slow speed manoeuvrability of the boat.

Always ensure that mooring equipment is not overloaded, with mooring cleats, bollards, rings and ropes kept in good condition as if they break or detach under load serious injury or even death can occur.

Never swim or dive into the rivers or broads; there may be weeds, strong currents or waterborne diseases.

If anyone falls in, avoid entering the water yourself but try to assist by throwing a line (or if no line is handy then something buoyant to help them stay afloat) while you get a line to them so you can help pull them back to shore; boats and many moorings have rescue equipment to assist in retrieving persons from the

water. Remember, unless your boat has a boarding ladder it can be very hard to pull a fully-clothed person from the water onto a boat, especially if they are very cold and cannot help themselves. If you cannot recover them within a few minutes and if there is no-one nearby that you can call to help, then dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard!

Coping with pets. Remember not to put yourself at risk by trying to help an animal apparently in distress. All too often people have died trying to assist animals that survive. Remember life jackets are available for some pets.

Anti-social behaviour. Every year many groups of people hold celebrations on the Broads with a party on a boat. Whilst great fun please be aware that drinking alcohol whilst on a boat can be potentially dangerous. Please consider other people enjoying the Broads.

If you should witness any behaviour that you think is anti-social or potentially dangerous please report it to the police by dialling 101 (or 999 in the case of an emergency).

Be careful with alcohol. Do not take control of a boat whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

If you have been drinking be especially careful getting on and off boats. Consider taking life jackets with you whilst ashore. At night remember to take a torch with you to assist in identifying trip hazards both on shore and on deck.

Ventilation. Good ventilation of interior spaces is important to ensure no build up of dangerous gases such as CO which is a by-product of combustion appliances fuelled by oils, solid fuel or gas. It has no smell, no taste, is colourless and is extremely difficult for human senses to detect. Therefore, it is essential that CO alarms are fitted in areas where CO could accumulate and pose a risk to health; of course all alarms should be tested routinely.

The use of canopies can potentially increase the risk of poisoning, even when a boat is making way.

Although external engine exhaust outlets discharge exhaust fumes into the open, the wind, aerodynamic effects and the proximity of nearby structures frequently result in the fumes entering the boat. Dangerous fumes can also enter the boat from a battery that has overheated, and such fumes are potentially highly explosive! So avoid using matches or a lighter or anything that can make a spark when in an enclosed space that contains fumes.

Never ignore the smell of exhaust fumes in any enclosed space. For more details, see *Carbon Monoxide* on page 139.

Dinghies/tenders. Life jackets or buoyancy aids should be worn when using dinghies and tenders, with special care taken getting into or out of them.

Outboard engines. Where a 'kill cord' is fitted ALWAYS use it.

Overloading. Never exceed the stated capacity of the boat as this will affect the stability and manoeuvrability. Also for similar reasons persons on board should be evenly distributed to avoid excessive heel or trim.