

Logistics – booking accommodation etc.

Accommodation

Bed and Breakfasts are a good option but remember that most can only accommodate a small number of people, so a larger group may have to split up.

Youth hostels are probably the cheapest option, but normally offer dormitory-style accommodation which may not suit everyone.

University Halls of Residence or conference centres may be a good option during the summer holidays and are usually cheaper than hotels.



Camping is a great option if you can find a place near the river to pitch a tent. Campsites close to the river will often have mooring points where you can secure boats.



Storage

If you are staying overnight, the boats and equipment will need to be securely stored.

Rowing clubs can often help with this if you are close to one on the route.

Most touring boats are designed to be pulled up out of the water and put on the bank without the need for trestles. However, it's a good idea to bring some means of protecting the hull if the ground is stony – pipe lagging works well and is available at most DIY shops.

If there is somewhere convenient and safe to tie the boat up, you may be able to secure it in the water.

You can often moor up on towpaths for free, providing you don't encroach on private land – but check local regulations.

You will also need somewhere secure to store blades, paddles, ropes etc. – any loose items which could “go walkies” while you are not around. If there isn't a convenient boathouse where you can lock them away, you may need to take them with you.



Trailer and car parking

If you are involved with a larger tour, you will probably not be boating from your own club. If you are going to be trailering boats, you will need to make sure there is somewhere to unload/load at the start and end of the tour.

This also involves checking there is secure parking for the trailer while you are on the water and that there is somewhere for rowers to park their cars.



Transport from accommodation to boating points is perhaps the most difficult aspect of the tour to organise, and the part which often leads to problems and delays.

If you are relying on the rowers' own cars, you will need to allow enough time in the morning to position some of the cars at the end of the tour to bring the crews back to the start.

If you can enlist some non-rowing car drivers, this can be invaluable. Otherwise, is public transport an option or do you have a budget to hire a coach or minibus?

Taking a break from Rowing

It's worth noting possible locations for food supplies, whether it be restaurants, pubs or supermarkets, and how to access them from the water.

Many riverside pubs will have a landing stage or a convenient place to moor. Remember that nice pubs on the river bank will get quite busy in good weather, so if you have a group it's a good idea to book.

The same applies to any places of interest you want to visit.



Safety Boats

Think about whether you will need a safety boat or boats. Some waterways authorities insist on this, and on lakes and open water it is absolutely essential. However, bear in mind that on rivers and canals with a lot of locks, the safety boat could get separated from the rest of the group, so bank safety patrols may be a better bet.



Other Equipment

As well as personal items which all participants should bring, the organisers will also need to provide the following items for each boat:



Paddle

Useful for going through locks or negotiating narrow stretches of water such as tunnels or bridges. Canoe paddles are fine, and not expensive.

Mooring spike

In case there is nothing handy to tie the boat to.



Boat hook

Useful for holding onto chains in narrow locks where you might have to pull in your blades.

- Bow and stern lines and attachment points.
- Something to cushion the boat when leaving on hard ground, e.g. foam pads, tubular pipe lagging.
- Bailer in case you get some water in the boat from wash or choppy conditions, and a sponge to mop up the last drop.
- Maps and emergency contact information, which will be provided at the tour briefing. These should be laminated or in a waterproof wallet.

Insurance

As a tour organiser, you will need to think about what insurance cover you need. If your tour only involves your own club, the club's insurance may be sufficient, however, on unfamiliar waterways there are additional risks. Consider the following:

- Public liability – in case of injury/damage to other people or boats.
- Equipment insurance – if you are hiring boats (but check in case the hiring club has cover for when boats are out on loan).
- Cancellation cover – this can be expensive. It may be better to include a disclaimer on your booking form that the organisers cannot be held responsible in case the tour is cancelled or curtailed because of bad weather etc.

Even if you are insured, you will have to pay part of any claim, so make provision for this in your budget.

Participants should be advised to take out their own insurance to cover personal injury, loss of possessions etc. just as they would for a holiday.

