

Checklist for a Tidal Thames trip (written from a narrowboater's perspective)

The day:

- Have you checked the weather forecast? For a narrowboat, cruising the tideway in winds above around 15 mph (Force 3 Beaufort Scale) may be difficult. **Met office, Met check**

Other Traffic:

- Is any **other shipping around?**

Your boat:

- Do you have insurance cover for this trip?
- Does your boat have VHF and is it licenced?
- Do you have enough freeboard i.e. space above vents and deck to cope with a moderate swell?
- Is your weed hatch secure?
- Is your bilge pump working?
- Do you have enough fuel? The fuel will get shaken around a bit so a full tank is a happy tank. Check your fuel filters.
- Is your anchor, chain and warp, ready to use?
- Are all your other ropes coiled, secured as necessary and ready for immediate use?
- Is your roof clear of clutter i.e. everything that you won't need for the tideway cruise?
- Are your doors and hatches closed? This particularly applies to front doors and side-hatches.
- Have loose items been secured or put away e.g bottles, jars, mugs, tv remote controls etc ? Loose items may be a hazard as they can be thrown around if conditions get choppy.

- Have you turned off your gas at source? We recommend this when cruising through choppy area such as the pool of London or round the Isle of Dogs.
- Have you a full compliment of fire extinguishers?
- Are your fire extinguishers in good condition and is the pressure indicator in the green?
- Have you extinguished all naked flames, candles, etc
- Are your gas cylinders properly secured?
- Is your electrics master switch readily accessible?
- Are your batteries well secured and are the terminals protected from shorting?
- On arrival – have you opened any ventilation closed down for the duration of the trip and before you light any appliances.

Your Engine:

- Is your engine in working order with no known issues?
- Are the fan belts correctly tensioned?
- Are your coolant, engine and gearbox oil levels all within the recommended limits of your engine manufacturer?
- There's no need to over-rev the engine even if going against the tide; normal canal limits are just fine. If going with the tide (usually the preferred option) it will carry you over the ground at about 3 mph and whilst you might feel you are not going through the water very fast you should check how fast you are going over the ground by looking at the shoreline
- Going too fast (too many engine revs) can cause overheating
- Before turning on any gas appliances again, test for gas leaks using a bubble tester.
- Test your smoke and CO alarms

Your drive train:

- Is your prop clear of any foreign objects?

VHF:

- Is your VHF radio switched on and tuned to channel 14 – London VTS?
- Are you talking to Limehouse on VHF Channel 80? **NOTE** not channel 80A – they'll hear you but you won't hear them.
- Have you requested a radio check – London VTS (Channel 14) and Limehouse Lock (Channel 80) are happy to oblige?
- Is your VHF radio and/or mobile phone within easy reach of the person in charge of communications?

Maps, Guides and other help:

- Do you have a map or guide so that you can identify where you are?
- Have you spoken to the team at Limehouse lock? They have a huge amount of experience and enjoy helping you – pay a visit to Limehouse Lock before your planned journey – they will appreciate that

Your Crew:

- Is everyone (human and animal) wearing lifejackets or buoyancy aids? Remember to unclip or take off self-inflating jackets when inside the boat.
- Is your crew briefed on what is expected of them – especially the need to keep a 360 degree watch?
- Is everyone appropriately dressed? Note: it is often chilly on the tideway

- Does your crew know what to do in an emergency?

Further advice from the **Boat Safety Scheme**