

Frequently Asked Questions

Bookings

- Bookings must be made in advance as we cannot guarantee there will be availability on the day for walk ins.
- Bookings must be made via the following approved channels; the Kingfisher website, by the main telephone number (01234 270044) or in person at the Kingfisher Reception. The Hire Fee must be paid in full at the time of booking and is non-refundable, unless cancelled by the Company due to dangerous conditions.
- There may be availability for walk in guests on the day, but walk in guests must make their booking via the Kingfisher Reception and this is subject to availability and restricted to available timeslots, completion of guest induction and signed terms and conditions.
- All individuals wishing to hire the boat must be over the age of 18 years old and must be able to provide a driving license or passport as identification prior to hiring the boat.

Boat Operation

- Electric boats offer a quiet and safe experience, allowing for effortless conversation without the need to raise your voice. The captain can participate without feeling isolated by engine noise or fumes. Inside the boat, there are minimal moving parts, except for the propeller shaft, which is below the floor and should not be accessed by passengers.
- Operating the boat is simple - push the throttle forward to accelerate and ease it back to decelerate and reverse. The river speed limit is 5 mph (8 kph). Although the boat can go faster, exceeding the limit is prohibited, as it results in fines and damages the riverbanks through erosion caused by excessive wash.
- For safe operation, distribute passenger weight across the boat evenly. When boarding, disembarking, or moving around, maintain your balance. Brief your crew on safety precautions. When mooring, keep fingers inside the boat and allow ropes to run freely. Avoid rope burns by controlling rope movement, and never let ropes drag in the water. We charge in full for any propeller damage caused by mishandling ropes.
- In an emergency, let the boat drift toward the nearest bank, especially when going downstream. Shift into neutral and steer toward the shore. If another boat offers a tow, follow the captain's instructions.
- If a rope or plastic bag becomes tangled around the propeller, immediately turn off the battery isolator and ignition. Propeller obstructions can cause severe engine damage, potentially leading to costly repairs.

River Navigation Guidelines

- Stay within the main river channel, keeping to the center. Straying could cause the boat to run aground and sustain damage.
- Steer on the right-hand side to overtake when safe and practical. Even if you have the right of way, it is your responsibility to avoid collisions. Exercise caution when overtaking and always maintain a safe distance.
- Adhere to the 8 kph (5 mph) speed limit.
- Avoid turning near bridges, bends, or locks. Do not turn across the path of oncoming boats; wait until it is safe.

- Boats traveling upstream must give way to those coming downstream when near bridges or sharp bends.
- Stay alert for hazards and take action as needed. If unsure, slow down or stop.
- It is strictly prohibited to navigate through locks. Locks require a specialist lock key, which is not provided.

Prohibited Actions

- Swimming from the riverbank is strongly discouraged due to strong currents, which have led to drowning incidents. Our buoyancy aids are for emergency use only and should not be used for swimming.
- Swimming or diving from the boat is strictly forbidden, including for dogs. Boat propellers move quickly and pose a serious danger. All passengers must remain onboard for the duration of the hire unless an emergency arises.
- Water Sports & Fishing: The use of water sports equipment and fishing from the boat is strictly prohibited.
- Hire boats are not permitted to operate between sunset and sunrise without prior permission and proper navigation lights. Barns Hotel Bedford Ltd strictly prohibits navigation after sunset.

Arrival and Returns

- Arrive at the jetty at least 15 minutes before your rental begins. This ensures we have time to complete the guest induction, fit buoyancy aids if necessary (mandatory for children under 12), distribute any pre-ordered food from the Kingfisher, and provide a safety briefing.
- No refunds will be given if you are late to your booking, and may result in a reduced time period for your hire slot.
- Return the boat on time to avoid delaying the next rental, incurring a late fee, and causing unnecessary difficulties for our team.
- Be sure to review the guest induction and terms and conditions of hire prior to departure.

Clothing, footwear and essentials

- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the trip.
- The British weather can be unpredictable, so it's a good idea to bring a waterproof coat or umbrella just in case.
- On sunny days, essentials like sunglasses, sun cream, and a hat will come in handy, although Badger does have a retractable Bimini top for shade, it won't cover all passengers! Don't forget a camera to capture the experience and a fully charged mobile phone for emergencies.
- The company will provide buoyancy aids for non-swimmers and children 12 and under.

Weather

- We still run our self-hire boat even if it is raining, so please pay attention to the weather and dress appropriately. We do not accept cancellations from the hirer on the basis of the weather.

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- If the company deems the conditions to be unsafe due to poor river conditions or very bad weather, we may need to postpone or cancel your visit. You will be offered to reschedule for a different time or date and if this doesn't suit, you will be offered a full refund.

Food & Drink

- Food and beverages purchased from the company may be consumed on board; however, bringing your own food or drinks is not permitted.
- The hirer and their guests are responsible for removing all rubbish and cleaning any spillages or mess by the end of the hire.
- All boats must be returned in a clean, rentable condition; otherwise, a £100 cleaning fee will be charged. Please do not litter.

Alcohol/Drugs

- It is illegal and strictly prohibited to consume drugs on board or anywhere on our premises.
- Alcohol is permitted to be consumed on board the boat, but the hirer must remain in control of the vessel at all times and it is illegal for them to be incapacitated or inebriated – please drink responsibly.
- The company and its representatives reserve the right to refuse service or boat hire for any reason, but particularly if they deem the hirer or crew to be impaired.
- All alcohol must be purchased from the company, it is not permitted to bring your own and these may be confiscated prior to boarding the vessel.

Age Limits/Family Friendly

- You must be at least 18 years old to hire the boat.
- Children of all ages are welcome to join the Captain's Crew!
- Safety is our top priority, so please ensure that all children aged 12 and under wear the provided buoyancy aids at all times during the hire.
- The hirer is responsible for the safety of any children on board.
- To keep young adventurers entertained, we also offer an activity sheet suitable for children aged 3 and up.

Dogs

- We welcome well-behaved dogs onboard, but they may not always be ideal companions for a boating trip. If you wish to bring your dog, please inform our team when booking. There is a charge of £15.00 per dog.
- For larger dogs, consider them as part of your group when determining boat capacity.
- To maintain the boat's condition, ensure your dog does not scratch the interior and clean up any mess before disembarking.
- Dogs are not allowed to swim from the boat. Additionally, to prevent muddy conditions onboard, please do not allow your dog to swim from the riverbank and then return to the boat.

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Disability Access

- Regrettably, Badger is not designed as an accessible boat. Additionally, our base at The Kingfisher has several steps from the jetty to the boat, making it difficult for wheelchair users to board.
- For a more accessible experience, we recommend a river trip on a larger, wheelchair-accessible boat. Our partners at BMK Waterways operate the John Bunyan Community Boat, which features an access lift. More details are available at [BMK Waterways](#).

Sustainability

- 'Badger' is a fully electric boat that produces zero emissions, ensuring an eco-friendly and pollution-free experience on the river. Its quiet operation, compared to traditional fuel-powered boats, also helps reduce noise pollution for a more peaceful journey.