

Learning Narrowboatian

Buying our narrow boat is totally dependent upon the sale of a property that we have a share in so we were very excited to finally get the bungalow on the market, one step closer to life on the water. Or so we thought. Of course we didn't expect to the sell the house immediately but that didn't stop us getting excited and intensifying our search for the perfect floating home and that's when sod's law took effect.

Of course we should have guessed that the total absence of any interest in the house whatsoever would be in direct contrast to a veritable flood of near perfect boats coming up on our searches immediately. We have a fairly detailed and strict criteria against which we are matching our floating dream home and it was unbelievably frustrating to tick all the boxes against the sales ads whilst knowing that with no interest in our property for sale there wasn't really any point in organising a viewing or even making a tentative enquiry. That

frustration has now got the better of us and having dropped the asking price on the bungalow we are busy organising visits to view boats that are for sale within our as yet, imaginary price range.



Spacious lounge:
Tick, Wood burner:
Tick, ...

This brings me to the topic of how

you choose a narrow boat to live on, which turns out to be very similar to choosing a house. In both cases it is common to lay out the basic requirements of style, price range, age, number of rooms, outside space etc. before selecting properties/boats to view based on those requirements.

However, listening to other boat owners that have been through the process reveals that like buying a house, all those carefully thought out requirements will all be abandoned the day you step on to the perfect boat and fall in love with it. It turns out that it's

more akin to choosing a dog at the rescue centre in that the boat, apparently, will choose us rather than the other way around. It doesn't mean I am abandoning my carefully constructed spreadsheet that, in theory, identifies our perfect craft. It simply means that we have to be prepared to fall head over heels in love one day and we will need a level headed friend to point out that the new love of our lives won't last five minutes on the canal before it sinks and hopefully they will stop us wasting our relatively easily earned cash on

it. A bit like the way your heart sinks when your precious teenage child comes home all doe eyed with that totally inappropriate girlfriend or boyfriend in tow and it's your job to delicately persuade them that they really could do better. Love is a dangerous thing.



Some of these
ads are just
teasing us.

The similarities with buying a house wain by virtue of the fact that most houses don't have an engine and you can't, therefore, drive them around. A narrow boat on the other hand is the essence of freedom and mobility; provided, it turns out, that it is of certain dimensions. There are two thousand miles of navigable canals and rivers in England and Wales and we want to explore all of them. That means that our craft can't be longer than sixty feet

and no more than seven feet wide if we aren't to be restricted by certain locks on the system. We are advised that since we want to 'liveaboard' (that's what we canal people call living permanently on the boat) we will also require at least a fifty seven foot boat to give us enough space so it would appear that our choices are actually quite narrow in more ways than one.



Restrictions may apply. Photo: Canal and River Trust.

In the mean time we go on looking and I am busy learning the new language of Narrowboatian so that I can converse with the salty dogs that are hanging up their windlasses and retiring, hopefully, to a nice two bedroomed bungalow close to the sea.



Swapsies?

Anybody want to swap a short fat bungalow for a long narrow dream home?