# Middlesbrough writer embraces narrowboat life to escape London costs despite rising challenges



A 33-year-old writer from Middlesbrough has swapped the high cost of London living for the canals of the UK, finding both freedom and challenges aboard her narrowboat. Kyrie Morris purchased the vessel for £21,000 in April 2022, using inheritance money to escape the overwhelming £1,600 monthly costs associated with her one-bedroom flat in the capital. Initially resembling a "floating shed" with no running water or electricity, Morris has transformed her narrowboat into a more habitable space, gradually adding essential amenities.

Despite her enthusiasm, life on a canal boat is not without its perils. During her first 15 months, navigating the bustling waterways of London while juggling a job as a bartender and completing her Master’s degree in International Music Marketing, Morris faced several obstacles. After the death of a close friend and a thwarted audition for Big Brother, she decided on a major change, embarking on a seven-week journey from London to Leeds in July 2023. However, her arrival was marred when her boat's engine malfunctioned, requiring significant repairs shortly thereafter. A fire incident later exacerbated her challenges but, as she recounted, it became a moment of clarity and resilience.

Kyrie's experience is not unique; the increasing unaffordability of living on water reflects a broader trend impacting many UK boaters. Approximately 35,000 individuals rely on the country’s 2,000 miles of waterways as a budget-friendly alternative to traditional housing. Yet, rising costs stemming from government funding cuts and inflation are pushing this lifestyle out of reach for many. The Canal and River Trust, which manages the waterways, has significantly increased licence fees in response to budget constraints, with some boaters reporting surcharges that could displace entire communities reliant on these channels for housing and livelihood.

Furthermore, the idiosyncrasies of narrowboat living present unique challenges, particularly during the winter months. Essential considerations like heating, insulation, and maintenance become crucial as temperatures drop. Experiences shared by others highlight the difficulties related to frozen pipes and condensation, alongside the necessity for constant upkeep. With rising fuel prices for heating and cooking also cited as a concern, the financial burden on boat residents becomes more pronounced.

Morris, who has invested around £12,000 in renovations, documents her journey on social media, amassing a following of 19,500 TikTok users. Through her platform, she shares both the highs and lows of narrowboat life with transparency, a factor that has resonated with her audience. The attention garnered by her story speaks to a collective curiosity surrounding alternative living, especially amidst growing housing challenges across the UK.

In focusing on her journey towards home improvement and self-discovery, Kyrie embodies a spirit of resilience common among those who navigate the complexities of life on the water. As she contemplates her future and the continued exploration of the UK’s waterways, her narrative serves as both a personal tale of overcoming hardship and a reflection of the larger context facing the boating community today.

Yet, as she prepares for another winter aboard her narrowboat, the challenges of living on water remain—a constant reminder of the trade-offs made for freedom and adventure in a landscape where traditional housing has become increasingly unattainable.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/canal-narrowboat-sale-engine-fire-uk-london-b2753509.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britains-boaters-say-water-dwelling-is-becoming-unaffordable-2025-04-16/> - An article from Reuters discusses the increasing unaffordability of living on boats in the UK. It highlights that around 35,000 people in England and Wales rely on the country's 2,000 miles of waterways as a more affordable alternative to land-based housing, particularly in London. However, rising costs driven by government funding cuts and inflation are making this lifestyle increasingly unaffordable. The Canal and River Trust, responsible for managing the waterways, has passed on some of its financial burdens to boaters, raising licence fees significantly—by 33% in some cases—and introducing new surcharges for continuous cruisers, who must change mooring locations every 14 days. The UK government announced in 2023 a reduction in annual funding for the trust from £52.6 million to £31.5 million by 2027, leading to an estimated £300 million shortfall over the next decade. Boaters warn that higher fees and limited access to permanent moorings could displace an entire community, which not only depends on the waterways for housing but also contributes to their upkeep. The trust maintains it is striving to preserve the waterway system for future generations while distributing costs fairly among users.
3. <https://canalriverhub.co.uk/living-on-a-narrowboat-in-winter/> - This article from Canal & River Hub outlines the challenges of living on a narrowboat during winter. It discusses issues such as heating and insulation, condensation and dampness, frozen pipes, canals freezing over, maintenance and repairs, limited daylight, and engine and fuel concerns. The piece emphasizes the importance of adequate preparation and maintenance to ensure a comfortable and safe winter living experience on a narrowboat.
4. <https://uk.jackery.com/blogs/lifestyle/living-on-a-narrowboat> - Jackery UK's blog post provides a comprehensive guide to the challenges of living on a narrowboat in the UK. It covers topics such as limited space on board, poor infrastructure, poor ventilation and thermal insulation, daily maintenance troubles, lack of security, and frequent moving. The article offers insights into the practical aspects of narrowboat living and the considerations one should take into account before making the transition.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/mar/06/yorkshire-canal-boaters-hebden-bridge-locked-fuel-support> - An article from The Guardian highlights the difficulties faced by boaters in Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire, during the winter of 2023. It discusses the steep rise in the price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), red diesel, coal, and wood, making heating and cooking on boats increasingly expensive. The piece also touches upon the exclusion of continuous cruisers from government assistance schemes, leading to financial strain for those living off-grid on the waterways.
6. <https://canalboatuk.com/living-on-a-narrowboat-downsides/> - Canal Boat UK discusses the downsides of living on a narrowboat, including limited water and fuel supplies, dealing with waste, living with nature, dust, banking and post box issues, loneliness, limited mobility, limited storage, and moving stuff. The article provides a candid look at the challenges faced by narrowboat dwellers and offers practical advice for those considering this lifestyle.
7. <https://www.boatsforsale.co.uk/knowledge-base/on-the-water/living-on-a-canal-boat.html> - This article from Boats for Sale outlines the challenges of living on a canal boat, such as narrow boat interiors, labour-intensive routines, endless sailing, safety and security risks, and expensive maintenance and repairs. It provides insights into the practical aspects of canal boat living and the considerations one should take into account before making the transition.