



# Weekend on the water

**RUGBY** has many hidden gems, among them the miles of canals that meander through the town, taking you away from it all. With more people opting to holiday at home, why not hire a narrowboat and enjoy some time off on your doorstep? **ALICE DYER** did just that and kept her fingers crossed for the weather.

**CHANELLE** - my four berth, 50ft home for a long weekend out on the open water on the North Oxford Canal.

Brightly painted in traditional red and green narrowboat colours, Chanelle was certainly a beauty sitting waiting for me at Rose Narrowboats in Stretton-under-Fosse near Rugby.

As a complete boating novice it was daunting to be faced with a 50ft vessel that you had to drive and look after for four days.

However the wonderful, experienced and friendly staff at Rose Narrowboats soon put my mind at rest by running through everything you could possibly want to know before setting sail.

After getting over the initial fear, I soon settled into boating life and even found myself sitting outside in the rain navigating Chanelle down the waterways. Not the usual kind of thing I would be doing on a Friday night but I instantly loved it.

Leaving Stretton-under-Fosse we headed south towards Newbold-on-Avon. The canal was beautiful, tranquil and very relaxing. You would

never know you were so close to town.

About two hours later we chugged into Newbold and moored in a beautiful spot just down the canal from the Barley Mow and Boat pubs.

After dinner at the Barley Mow, drinks, sleep then a stroll to the shop in Newbold the next morning to buy the papers, we were ready to set off again.

Everyone on the waterways is very friendly and the etiquette is to greet anyone you see along the way - other boaters, walkers and even dogs. Approaching Hillmorton Locks I was very grateful for some friendly advice as no one on board had ever opened a lock before and we had to navigate through three.

Once you get into the swing of things, it's quite easy but you have to be fairly active to push the gates and wind the handles.

Shortly after that we arrived at the Royal Oak pub - and decided to turn around.

Had we gone any further we would have been on our way to Braunston where the Historic Boat Rally was taking place.

I had initially wanted to go to Braunston as part of the trip because there are some nice pubs there but it was too daunting to face so much traffic at such an early stage in my boating experience.

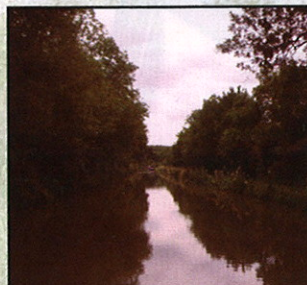
Anyway, the canal around the Royal Oak was not very pleasant. The water was full of rubbish and the embankments were overgrown. It's a real shame because the waterways are beautiful and deserve more respect.

Hillmorton Locks and surroundings however were beautiful so we headed back there for the night. There are lots of nice little shops at the locks, plenty of activity and the quaint Badsey's Bistro for a bite to eat and a glass of wine or two.

The weather seemed to get better and better as the weekend went on. We started with rain Friday, warm but cloudy on the Saturday and Sunday we woke up to blazing hot sunshine and a beautiful view across the fields.

Sunday was spent topping up our tans as we chugged back towards Stretton-under-Fosse through the beautiful stretch of canal we'd come down the previous two days.

There is plenty to see and look at along the way, including lots



of canal wildlife. We spent the last night close to Stretton-under-Fosse because

Chanelle had to return to base camp for 9.30am ready for her next crew.

She was a fantastic narrowboat and served our every need. Chanelle was clean and surprisingly spacious with an open deck complete with table and chairs at the front and a lounge area with TV, DVD and CD player. There was a galley with every piece of equipment you could ask for, two bedrooms and a bathroom.

Rose Narrowboats offer a range of boats which can be hired for a long weekend, week, two weeks or more. There is also a day boat if you just fancy a brief taste of life on the waterways.

All the boats are of the same high quality and I would highly recommend Chanelle. She was wonderful and we were quite sad when our canal break ended on Monday morning.

The weather was better than when I went to Spain earlier in the year, we didn't have to cope with airport queues or have far to drive. It was a fun-filled, back-to-basics, relaxing weekend break.

For more information on Rose Narrowboats call 01788 832449, email [enquiries@rose-narrowboats.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@rose-narrowboats.co.uk) or visit [www.rose-narrowboats.co.uk](http://www.rose-narrowboats.co.uk).

