

Europe holidays

Top 10 boat-hotels in Europe

As the boutique boatel (boat-hotel) Bert's Barges opens on London's Regent's Canal, it's time to consider other places to stay on the water. Here we pick 10 around the UK and Europe that'll float your boat

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A capital idea ... Bert's Barges, London

Bert's Barges, London, UK

Lyris is about as far as you can get from a traditional rose-painted, potted geranium-strewn houseboat. Matt black on the outside, with a sleek roof terrace and HotBox barbecue, its almost-monochrome interior comes speckled with vintage Scandinavian finds, a walk-in Agape shower, designer Atelier Areti lighting and underfloor heating. But this isn't any old houseboat. It's owned by interiors company Bert & May and opened last week as a "boutique barge hotel", although hotel is a bit of a misnomer given the set-up; with one bedroom (there's also a pull-out bed in the living area), a kitchen, bathroom and living-dining area, this is more holiday rental than hotel. A welcome hamper comes with craft beer; you can choose between a Brompton and a vintage rowing boat when you want to venture out - and breakfast is delivered to the door. On a mooring along [Regent's Canal](#) in Hackney, there are plans to expand to Little Venice, and to York and Bristol.

● From £250 B&B a night (based on a two-night stay), [bertsbarges.com](#)

Le Boatel, Arles, France



If one of the benefits of boat stays is that you get to wake up in the very centre of the city for the cost of a bed out in the sticks, then this floating hotel on the Rhône bucks the trend. It's a 30-minute walk into the centre of Arles and the city's raft of Roman spoils. If you don't mind the offbeat location, however, its seven cabin-style bedrooms make a distinctive base for exploring this part of Provence. Venture out during the day then return in the evening for a glass of wine on the roof and a seafood platter in the onboard restaurant.

● Doubles from €90, room only, [leboatel.com](#)

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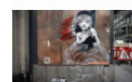
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Design Houseboat, Amsterdam, the Netherlands



Transformed from a 1930s freight barge over the last five years, the Jolie is home to a water-loving family of four and is berthed in Zaandam, 10 minutes from the centre of Amsterdam. When the family are not there, it's available to rent. With three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a rain-shower and sauna, it's not exactly cramped inside. Neither is it gloomy, with a light, bright, contemporary style. And while a waterside perch isn't every parent's dream hideaway, the boat makes a surprisingly family-friendly space, with a stylish playroom and a small jetty "garden".

● Sleeps 6, from £182 a night, self-catering, airbnb.co.uk

Modern Boat, Berlin, Germany



As the team behind architecturally interesting holiday rentals website Welcome Beyond, brothers Chris and Oliver Laugsch were never likely to buy a bungalow as their own letting property. Instead, they've invested in an ultra-modern houseboat overlooking a bay in the Spree river in eastern Berlin (the setting is important given the boat's floor-to-ceiling windows). Inside the vessel, a sharp rectangular prism, there's a trio of spaces: a kitchen, a lounge (there's a second double bed here) and a bedroom with bathroom - all fitted out in high-spec minimalism (the kitchen and floor are made from poured concrete). Across the front is a long wooden deck, with a ladder into the water. Bikes are supplied or the brothers can arrange a private boat tour around the city.

● From €180 a night for two, welcomebeyond.com

Harbour Houseboat, Isle of Wight, UK



One of the benefits of renting this former Thames lighter (barge), now moored up in Bembridge harbour, is that it is roomy. With four bedrooms (two doubles, a triple bunk and a single plus pull-out), two bathrooms and a large kitchen-living area, it sleeps up to nine. Appropriately nicknamed “Sturdy”, the boat has also been designed with nitpickers in mind: the king-size beds are from Loaf, linen is from The White Company, and high chairs, cots and games mean young guests are catered for, as well as older ones. For the latter, there’s a rooftop deck for cocktails over the Solent and numerous pubs and cafes on the doorstep (including a crab shack two minutes’ walk away).

● From £198 a night, self-catering, canopyandstars.co.uk

Boatel Charlie, Belgrade, Serbia



If you associate travelling on the Danube by boat with joining an expensive cruise, Boatel Charlie will prove otherwise. A floating poshtel moored beside Belgrade’s leafy Park Prijateljstva (Friendship Park), it has eight modern bedrooms, ranging from doubles to rooms that sleep five (all have private toilets and showers). Wi-Fi is free, bikes can be rented and, while breakfast is included, there’s a shared kitchen for self-catering at other mealtimes.

● Doubles from €48 B&B, boatelcharlie.com

St Katharine, Barcelona, Spain



Vintage-style radios, shipping-chart wallpaper and thick white bathrobes add glamour to this boat-based B&B in Barcelona's Port Forum marina. Three of the five cabins are en suite and, being staffed around the clock, the service is as shipshape as the setting. Continental breakfasts (€11.95), simple tapas meals (€14.95) and more elaborate three-course suppers (€24.95) can be booked, and air-conditioning means there's no need to worry about being baked in mid-summer. Sit and spy on super-yachts from the on-deck hot tub, stroll along the waterfront to the beach, or take a 10-minute metro ride to the city centre.

● Doubles from €90, room only, or from €295 for eight people exclusive-use, self-catering, bed-and-breakfast-barcelona.com

CPH Living, Copenhagen, Denmark



As with many hotels in the Danish capital, even the most unpromising structures become magical when given a shiny Scandinavian makeover. That's certainly the case with this 12-room hotel, close to [Noma in Copenhagen](http://noma.dk)'s Christianshavn area. What was once an old German barge is now a light-filled, steel-and-wood hideaway, with ocean liner-like windows, white-tiled showers screened by frosted glass, walls dressed with original art and, thanks to a few clever architectural tricks, more storage than many would imagine. The roof doubles as a large sun terrace, perfect for soaking up views of the city's waterfront, and its dramatic "Black Diamond" library.

● Doubles from £95 B&B, cphliving.com

Port X, Prague, Czech Republic



Photograph: Airbnb



An experimental houseboat project by Czech architectural practice SAD, Port X is a rectangular building made from six C-shaped modules fitted together; between the roof and the floor are a series of glass panels opening onto a waterside deck. Happily for visitors to the country's capital, it's now available as overnight accommodation, having been kitted out inside by interiors company Konsepti and docked in Holešovice. Sleeping up to three people, the houseboat has one bedroom and comes with a bathroom, two toilets, a living area (with sofa bed) and kitchen - the latter ready-stocked with breakfast groceries.

● From £103 a night, self-catering, [airbnb.co.uk](https://www.airbnb.co.uk)

Le Boudoir de Serendipity, Paris, France



View of Asnieres sur Seine



Run by Marie and Georges-Mickael ("not the singer"), with more than a touch of Amélie-ish whimsy, this pretty barge-based B&B has three smart, en suite bedrooms decorated with an eclectic mix of antique typewriters, parquet flooring, linen bedding and contemporary toadstool lights. Breakfasts are homemade and continental and the boat is docked in Asnieres-sur-Seine, 15 minutes' walk from the closest metro station - or €20 by taxi from the Gare du Nord. It's close enough for daytripping to the big sights but a peaceful retreat at the end of the day. Or, as Marie puts it: "Goodbye traffic jam and pollution. Hello swans."

● Doubles from €140 B&B, leboudoirdeserendipity.com

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