

# Exercising by the canal

Great ways to enjoy your local canal or river



Canal &  
River Trust

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Connecting many urban and rural areas across England and Wales, canals and rivers provide essential spaces for wildlife and people, helping us all feel happier and healthier.

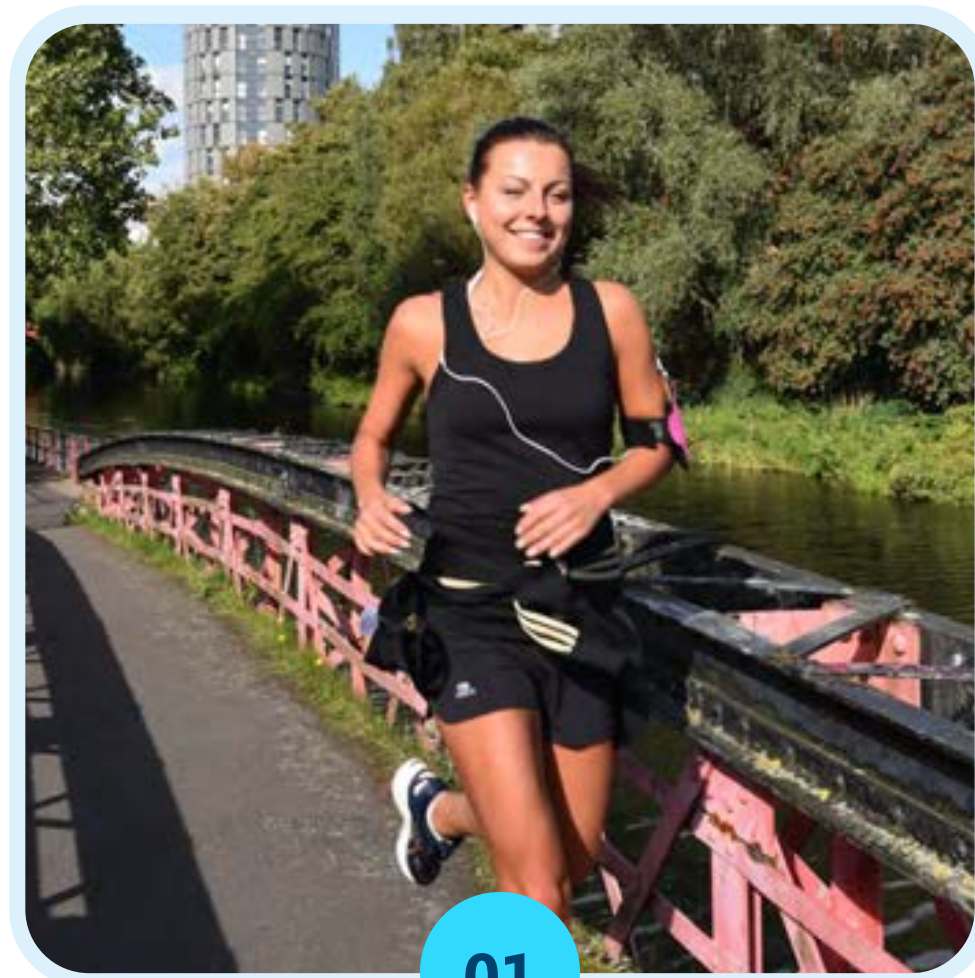
Exercising by water can be more beneficial for you, than exercising along the roadside, or even at the gym. Soak up the benefits exercising by water brings and enjoy a jog along canals and rivers.

Running, cycling or walking alongside water is a great way to workout. Not only is the scenery enjoyable, but the change in surroundings can be both mentally and physically rewarding.



# Tips for running along the canal

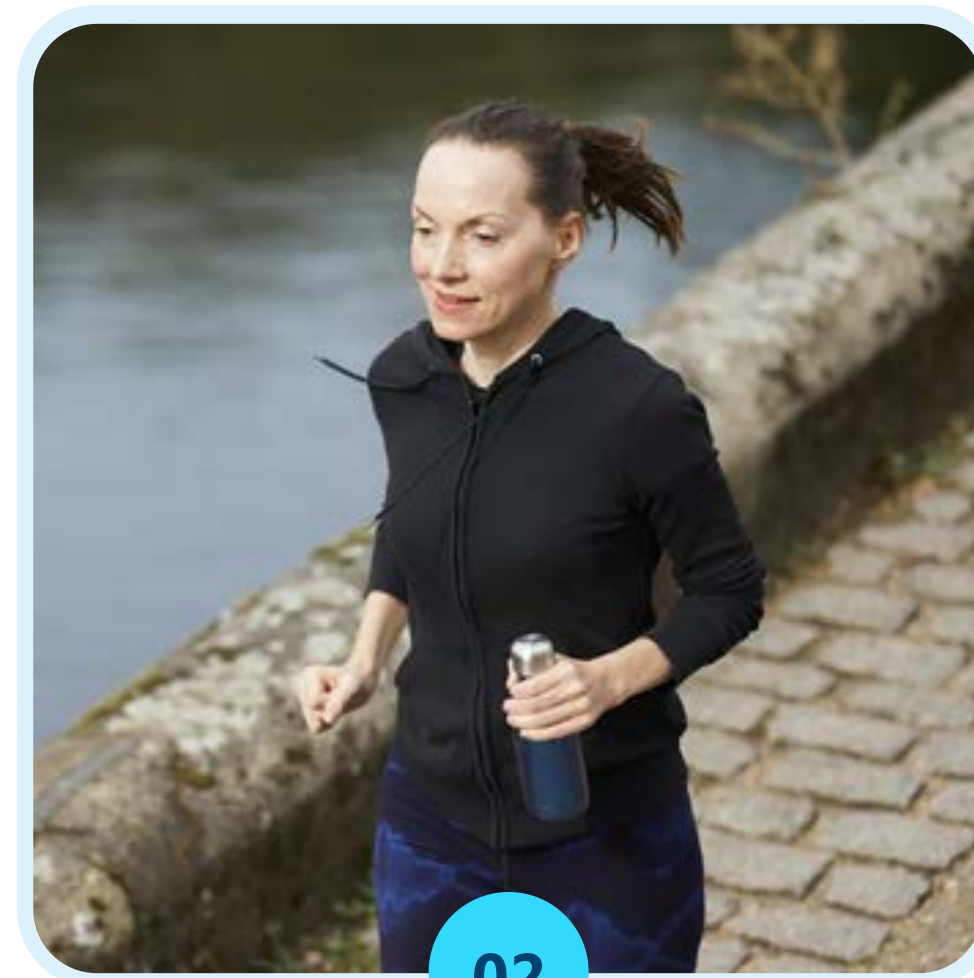
Our towpaths are great places to spend time, so they attract many different groups of people. To make sure everyone stays safe and has a good time please consider these tips when you're out running.



01

## Awareness

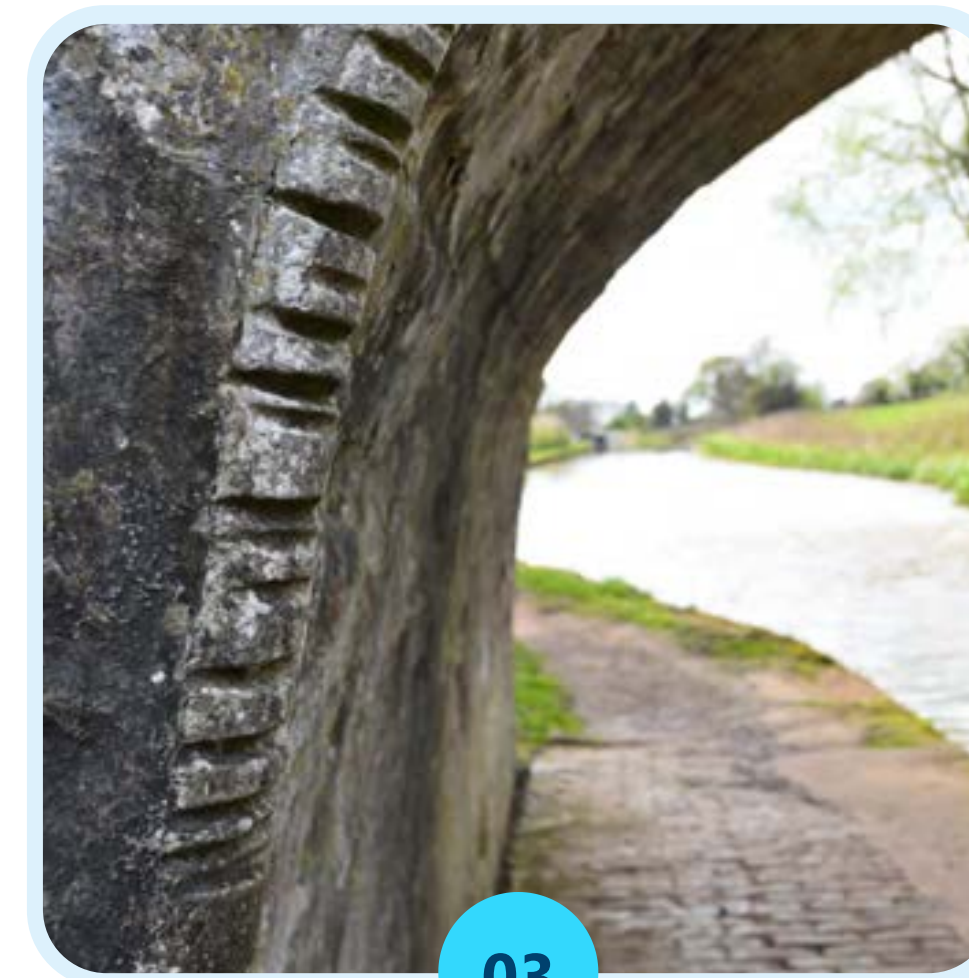
Consider removing your headphones or have the volume low so you can still hear around you.



02

## Speed

Do not sprint - take your time, enjoy the surroundings and don't get too close to the edge.



03

## Watch your head!

Please take care, some of our bridges can be quite low.



04

## Stay alert

Look down as well as up and keep an eye out for any obstacles in your way.

# Getting the right kit



## Material

Choose the right fabrics when picking running clothing based on the season/weather.



## Footwear

Pick running shoes and socks suitable for the terrain.



## Visibility

Your running gear should be easily visible, especially in the dark.



## Stay warm

Dress in layers when running in the winter.



## Headwear

Choose the appropriate head wear for different weather conditions and time of day.



# Six reasons to run by water

Running by water gives you even more benefits than your usual jog along the roadside. Read on to find out why.

## 1. The scenery is better

Enjoy jogging alongside colourful boats, see a wide range of wildlife and pass some of the country's finest examples of historical buildings.

## 2. Relax your mind

Our canals are the perfect place to escape from the stresses of everyday life. Running by water can help you relax your mind and you may even find you can run for longer.

## 3. You'll get closer to nature

No matter whether you're in the heart of a big city or out in the countryside, our towpaths are teeming with wildlife.

## 4. Escape the pollution

Take a run along one of our car-free canals and you'll enjoy far fresher air. You'll likely feel more refreshed at the end of a canal run compared to your usual road route.

## 5. A nicer soundscape

Swap honking horns and rumbling engines for the sweeter sounds of birdsong, chugging boats and water flowing through our historic locks.

## 6. No hills

Unless you make a beeline for one of our iconic lockflights, your run along the canal will be level for most of the way, and there's very little chance of you getting lost.



# Running checklist

Before you run along a canal or river, check to make sure you have everything you need. Being well-prepared will help you have an enjoyable, safe and comfortable run. This way, you can really soak up the benefits of running by water. Here's our handy list of things you might need.

- Road or trail running shoes
- Lightweight and waterproof clothing
- Wicking t-shirt
- Running tights/shorts
- Hat and gloves in the colder months
- Neon and reflective clothing for winter months
- Water bottle
- Blister pads
- Waist running belt or armband
- Suncream
- Head torch for winter months
- Smartphone or smart watch with GPS/running app



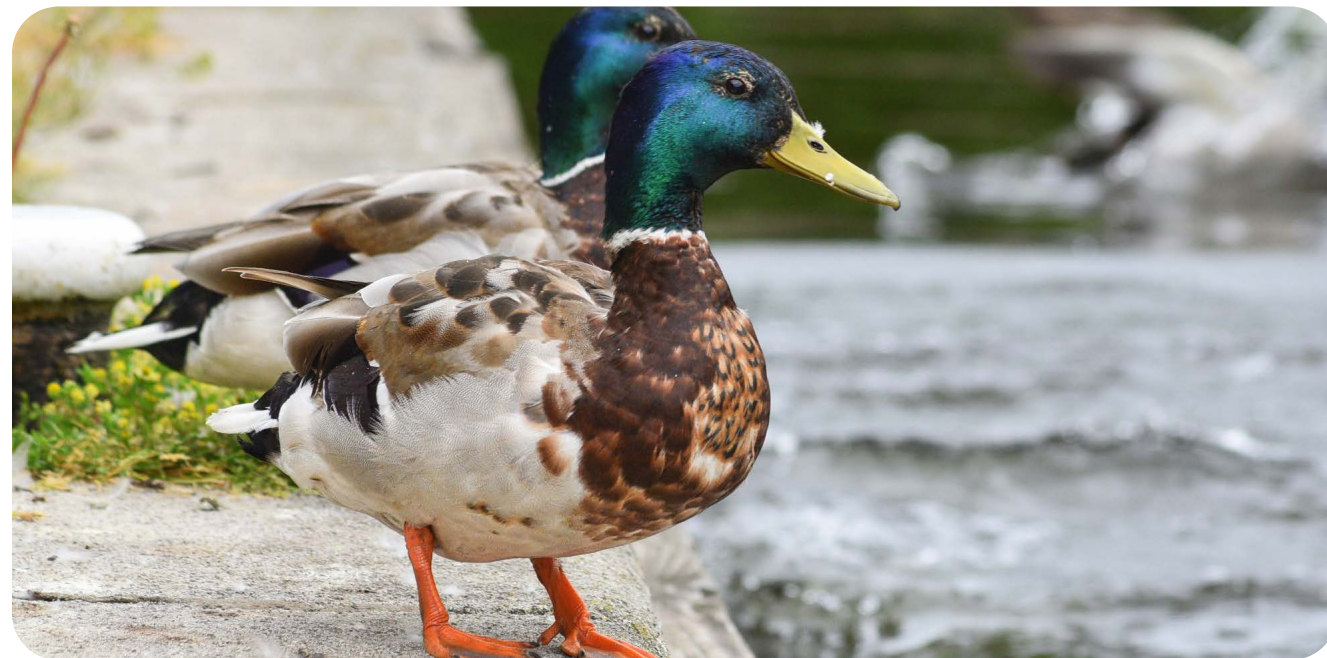
# Canalside or gym workout?



Exercising by canals can activate more muscles, boost performance and increase wellbeing.



Make some quiet time for yourself along the canal rather than a confined gym that can get busy.



Exercising near wildlife and nature can help alleviate stress.



Swap running on a treadmill, which can feel monotonous and confined, for the fresh outdoors.

In spring and summer, 25 percent of the body (the hands, face, neck and arms) is exposed to the sun, and in these seasons, about 8 to 10 minutes of sun exposure at noon produces the recommended amount of vitamin D.

[uclahealth.org](https://www.uclahealth.org)



# Cycling by the canal

Cycling by the canal is a rewarding and inspiring experience, and can help to make us happier and healthier. We have thousands of miles of fairly-level, traffic-free towpaths that are perfect for any cyclist to enjoy, regardless of age or cycling ability.

Whether you're looking to enjoy a nice cycle out with family and/or friends or simply going for a morning ride to start your day, our towpaths are the perfect setting for you to enjoy some healthy exercise with some picturesque scenery to enjoy.



**Ride in comfort**



**Find the right location for**



**Wear the right gear**



# Your free outdoor gym

**You don't need to join an expensive gym. Head to your local canal and enjoy a free workout in the fresh air.**

Our canals and rivers are great places to go for a run, ride, walk or paddle. However, there are so many more ways to get active by the water, making use of benches, trees and steps near our towpaths.

Search for [Your free outdoor gym](#) on our website for a series of short videos to show you how to spice up your exercise regime by the canal.

For a full body workout, try the following:



**Wall sits**



**Bench dips**



**Step ups**

Remember, check that all surfaces are dry, stable and secure before starting any exercise.

# Walking for health

Walking is one of the most natural and effective forms of exercise. Take a look at the range of benefits you can enjoy from a simple stroll along your local canal.



## 1. Walk by the water

Plenty of evidence suggests that simply being near to water makes people more content and relaxed, so what better place to take a walk than your local canal? Our waterways offer traffic-free, level walking routes through some of our busiest towns and cities, perfect for walking for health.



## 2. Walk for mental health

When you step off the pavement and onto the towpath, you step into a whole new world. It's the perfect place to take a deep breath, shrug off the stresses of the day and enjoy a rejuvenating walk.

Not only is towpath walking a great way to de-stress, you'll also be burning off calories. Experts say just 30 minutes a day is enough to help you feel fitter.

# The towpath code

Canals and rivers can be very lively spaces. Visit them and you could see cyclists, walkers, boaters, anglers, kayakers and even horses pulling boats along the water. Our towpath code encourages everyone to be more aware when using the towpaths.

Having so many different activities taking place does mean that people need to share the space considerately.

To make sure everyone gets the most out of their time by the water we asked users of the towpaths to help us develop a towpath code. This is the result. It's a common sense guide to sharing the towpath and what to expect of others.

## **1. Share the space**

Towpaths are popular places to be enjoyed by everyone. Please be mindful of others. Keep dogs under control and clean up after them.

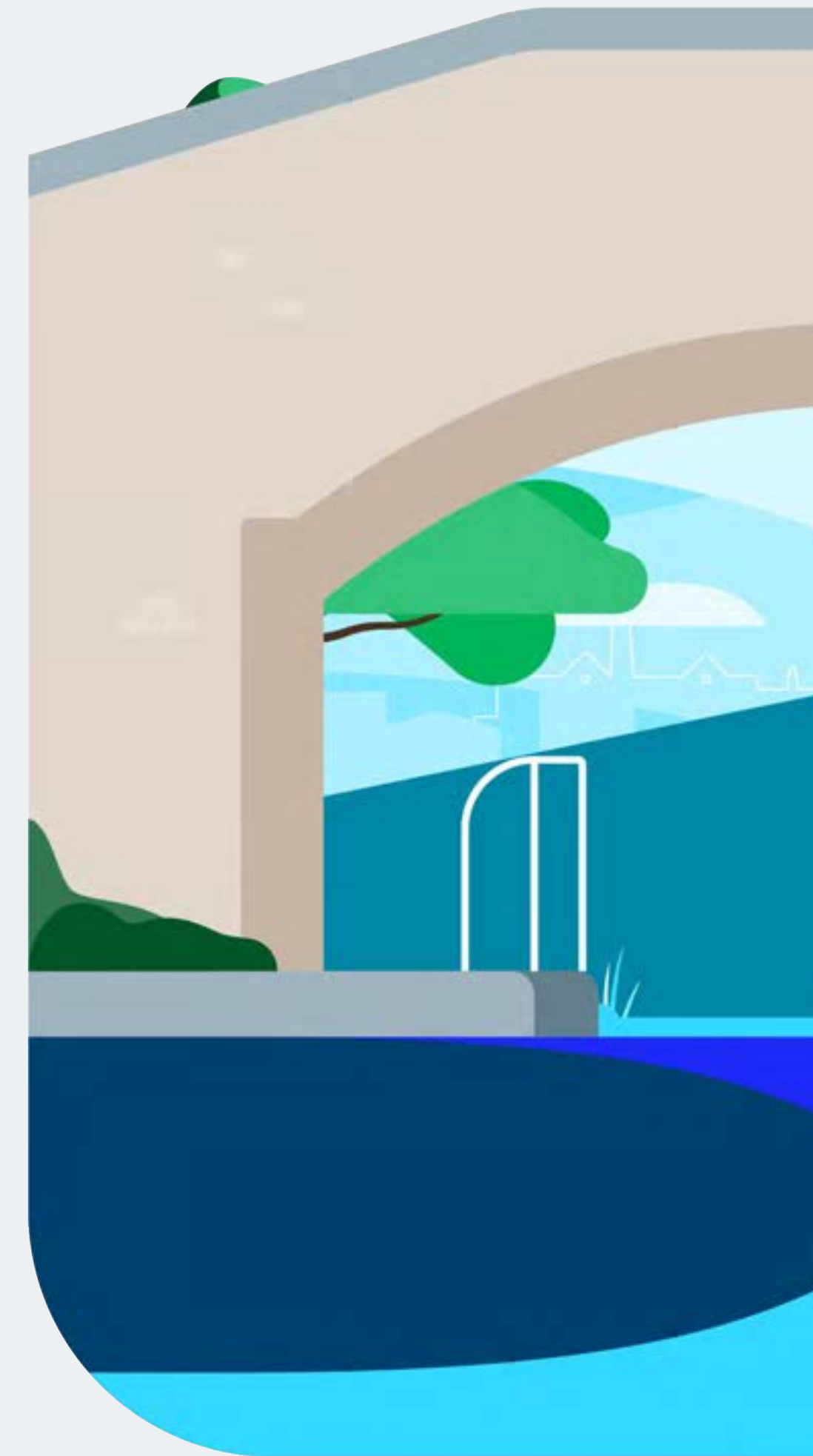
## **2. Drop your pace**

Pedestrians have priority on our towpaths so cyclists need to be ready to slow down. If you're in a hurry, consider using an alternative route for your journey.

## **3. It's a special place**

Our canals and rivers are living history with boats, working locks and low bridges, so please give way to users and be extra careful where visibility is limited.

**Read more at:** [canalrivertrust.org.uk/support-us/our-campaigns/stay-kind-slow-down/our-towpath-code](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/support-us/our-campaigns/stay-kind-slow-down/our-towpath-code)



# Find your route

We have hundreds of beautiful locations all over the UK for you to enjoy, regardless of where you are based. Whether you're looking for a towpath where you'll be able to witness rich wildlife and enjoy the company of others, or you're looking for something that's more secluded and private, there will be a location for you. Exercising by a canal or river where the scenery and landscape provides a setting and atmosphere that is more tranquil and stimulating than the gym, road or streets can have great benefits on both mental and physical health.

## Walking / running routes:

[canalrivertrust.org.uk/things-to-do/walking/canal-and-river-walks-near-me](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/things-to-do/walking/canal-and-river-walks-near-me)

## Cycling routes:

[canalrivertrust.org.uk/things-to-do/cycling/canal-cycling-routes](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/things-to-do/cycling/canal-cycling-routes)

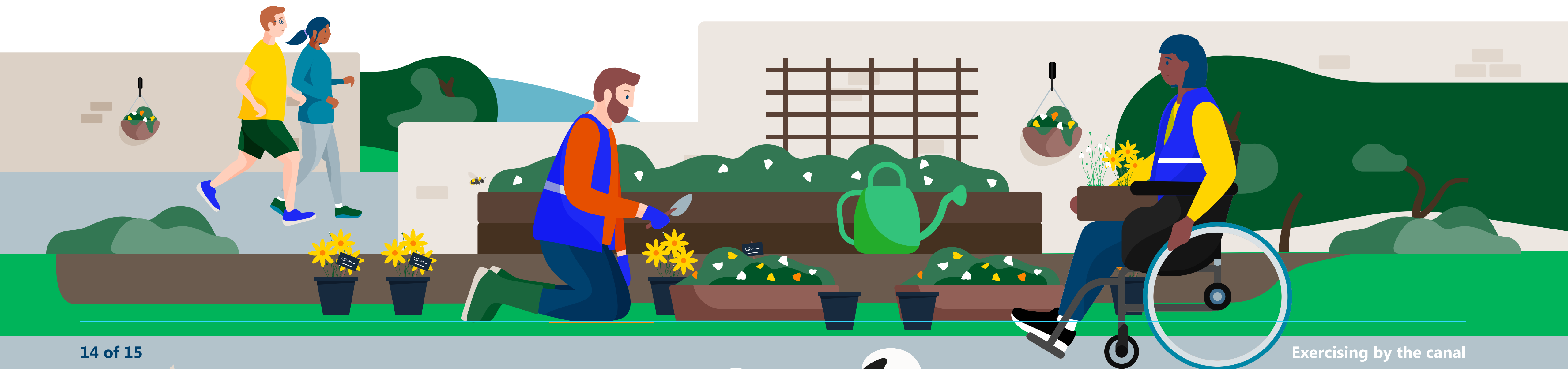


# Our accessible towpath

Our canals and rivers provide year-round opportunities for people to get out and about in the fresh air. We want as many people as possible to experience the benefits of spending time by the water.

For people with disabilities who are looking to enjoy the waterway network, the problem can often be finding out in advance whether a route will be suitable. However, this information is becoming more readily available.

Visit [canalrivertrust.org.uk/things-to-do/walking/accessibility-map](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/things-to-do/walking/accessibility-map) for detailed information about accessible towpaths near you.



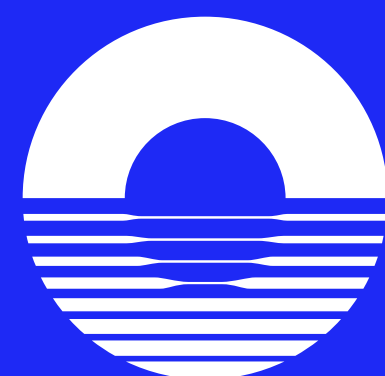
# Life's better by water

Sign up to our newsletter for ideas of places to explore at [canalrivertrust.org.uk/newsletter](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/newsletter)

Stay connected: Follow us



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