

WESTMINSTER PASSENGER SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Thames River Boats (WPSA) is the only company currently operating a licenced scheduled riverboat service from Westminster to Kew, Richmond and Hampton Court.

Daily sailings from Westminster Pier are operated between April and October, and very greatly on tidal conditions This greatly affects the timetable of sailings, and it is often extremely difficult to guarantee sailings more than a couple of days ahead. Equally the tides can affect the stepping distance from boats to pier.

The company has been running the service for over 30 years

We operate fleet of vessels, with historic association with The River Thames. All boats are operated by a Licenced Waterman & Lighterman, who have completed a five to seven year apprenticeship to become qualified Watermen, and have an extensive knowledge of the river. The current fleet consists of

The Connaught

The Cockney Sparrow

The Henley

The Princess Freda

All the vessels were purpose built for service on the River Thames, and are ideally suited for the varying and particular reaches of the river above Hammersmith where the tides and conditions, and heavily silted sections of the river require a shallow draught.

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DISABLED ACCESS TO VESSELS AND PIERS

Thames River Boats (WPSA) are sensitive to the restrictions on disabled facilities on our service

We constantly work with London River Services and disabled groups to monitor facilities for passengers with physical disabilities on board our river boats and encompass any suggestions to improve facilities.

Our boats are historic vessels, and our piers vary on size the step up or down depending on tidal conditions and variations of particular piers, some of which are fixed and some floating.

Ramps are not available or practical for boarding and electric wheelchairs or mobility scooters are not able to board due to weight.

Passengers who have some mobility and are able to negotiate two or three steps assisted by crew can be accommodated and non- motorised wheelchairs can normally be lifted on board and seating made available for them on deck.

While all of our vessels have toilet facilities, disabled toilets are not available.

Embarking and disembarking at piers can vary greatly subject to the tide at time of boarding. As such wheelchair access is impossible unless the passenger can negotiate the steps, and the non-motorised wheelchair can be carried down the steps and on board.

Crew will always try help wherever feasible.

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DISABLED ACCESS TO VESSELS

Although the boats were purpose built for passenger use on the River Thames, the design and facilities of these historic boats does not favour modern disabled requirements.

All of the vessels are restricted in terms of disabled access, and it is not possible to board a motorised wheelchair.

A lightweight non motorised chair can be boarded if the wheelchair user is able to leave the chair and step on board with assistance of the crew. The chair can then be lifted on board to allow use on board. The crew are more than happy to move seating to allow the wheelchair user the preferred seating location.

Access to toilet facilities varies from vessel to vessel, but in all cases is not accessible to wheelchairs, and requires mobility for use.

Access to lower and upper decks is not possible for wheelchairs, as varying levels of steps access these decks.

Crews on all boats will always do their utmost to facilitate the needs and requirement of any passengers that require extra assistance in any way.

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The Connaught

This historic vessel, built by Salter Brothers Oxford in 1911, has plied the river for over a century. She has been completely renovated by Colliers Launches and is now, probably the finest example of an Edwardian pleasure boat on the river Thames and still retains her worldly charm and reflects the elegance of the period. For sightseeing she will accommodate up to 250 people and has a comfortable salon and features open front and rear decks.



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The Henley

The Henley is an original Thames Steamer built for Salter Brothers of Oxford by Edwin Clarke and Company.

Launched for the first time in 1896, she has witnessed nearly 110 years of changing English heritage and history along the River Thames.

The Henley carries up to 93 passengers, and has been carrying passengers from Westminster to Hampton Court for almost 40 years



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THE PRINCESS FREDA

Princess Freda was built in 1926 by T.C. Letcher on the Isle of Wight for Whatfords who had operated river boats on the Thames since before the turn of the century

This pretty Thames river boat has been restored to a particularly high standard with open front and top decks and an attractive oak and mahogany lined saloon

The Princess Freda saw active service in the second world war when she joined the fleet of 'little ships' in June 1940 and crossed the English channel to help rescue British troops stranded on the beaches of Dunkirk, Shas taken part in two subsequent commemorations of this event, and on each of these occasions the Princess Freda has crossed the channel to Dunkirk with other surviving 'little ships'.



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The Cockney Sparrow

The Cockney Sparrow was built in 1976 at Eel Pie Island. She is a two level boat with a deceptively large enclosed saloon and an open top deck.

The Cockney Sparrow can carry up to 107 passengers



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Vessels

The Queen Elizabeth

Built by Salter's steamers in 1926 ,the Queen Elizabeth a substantial open front and back deck's suitable for warm weather cruising and sightseeing and 2 saloon areas

The upper saloon is bright and spacious, fitted out with oak and mahogany and complimented with an original hardwood deck seating area

The recently refurbished lower saloon has fixed table top seating.

In 1950 distinguished guests from the Soviet Union cruised the river Thames from Westminster to Greenwich in the historic Queen Elizabeth.



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DISABLED ACCESS TO PIERS

WESTMINSTER PIER

With its main office at Westminster pier, Westminster Passenger Services link to a comprehensive network of downriver services to the Tower of London, Greenwich and the Thames barrier.

The pier is directly linked to Westminster underground which is served by the District, Circle and Victoria lines



The pier is accessible from the tube station and from Victoria Embankment by a ramp that can be used by a wheelchair, however at low tide the gradient of the ramp can be very steep for wheelchairs

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DISABLED ACCESS TO PIERS

KEW PIER

Westminster Passenger Service Association are the exclusive owners and operators of Kew Pier

Within walking distance to both the Royal Botanic Gardens and Kew Palace the Pier is currently served by a regular services from Westminster, Richmond and Hampton Court. The pier is walking distance from Kew Garden Mainline Station and Kew Bridge underground on the District line



The pier is accessible from the riverbank by a ramp that can be used by a wheelchair, however at low tide the gradient of the ramp is steep for wheelchair access

In addition the variance of tides and continued silting of the river around Kew can have a detrimental effect on water levels.

In all cases access from the pier to the boats requires a step to access to vessels

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DISABLED ACCESS TO PIERS

RICHMOND Landing Stage

Westminster Passenger Service Association are the exclusive owners and operators Richmond Landing Stage

The pier itself is accessed from the towpath by a very low step, and as such can be accessed by practically all levels of ability.

The pier is a fixed pier, and as such boarding of boats is subject to tidal variations.

Boarding is by way of a series of steps, the number of which vary greatly subject to the tide, and embarking/disembarking is onto the nearest available step.

As such wheelchair access is impossible unless the passenger can negotiate the steps, and the wheelchair can be carried down the steps and on board



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DISABLED ACCESS TO PIERS

Hampton Court Landing Stage is owned by Hampton Court Palace
And operated under licence to WPSA

The existing pier is fully open for access 24 hours a day with no gate to the entrance or barriers to the steps to prevent unauthorised access, as have our own piers at Richmond and Kew.
The pier is currently only accessible by steep steps, which would be impossible to negotiate in a wheelchair, and would prove extremely difficult for anybody with mobility issues



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Service timetables & Tidal Variations

The 35 kilometres from Westminster to Hampton Court is the longest regular scheduled boat service available from London. On a fiercely tidal river such as The Thames it is difficult and sometimes impossible to provide an exact time of arrival. The timetable accounts for all predictable factors and is able to give a best estimate of journey times. It is worth listing here the factors taken into consideration when preparing our timetables.

There are two tides a day on the Thames it takes approximately five hours to come in and little over seven hours to go out. Each high tide occurs slightly more than twelve hours later than the last, commanded by the gravitational pull of the moon the tide advances.

Near to the new and full moons (about every two weeks) we have spring tides when there is a rise and fall between low tide and high tide of up to 8m (26'). Seven to eight days after spring tides we have neap tides where the tide is neither as low nor as high, then the difference between low water and high water is around 5m (16')

Unfortunately, tidal predictions cannot allow for other factors such as wind in the estuary and land water from the hills, that all have a bearing on the time and height of the tide

The most obvious way the tide affects vessels is direction. Traveling along with the tide; upstream with the flood and downstream with the ebb, is more efficient than pushing against the ebb going up and the flood going down.

To illustrate, the Henley can complete the journey from Westminster to Kew in **55 minutes** with the tide yet the same journey takes **90 minutes** against the tide.

Additionally, continued silting of the river around Kew can have a detrimental effect on water levels