



**Finistère**

*Penn-ar-Bed*

LE DÉPARTEMENT



# The Nantes-Brest Canal

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A Guide for Boaters in Finistère



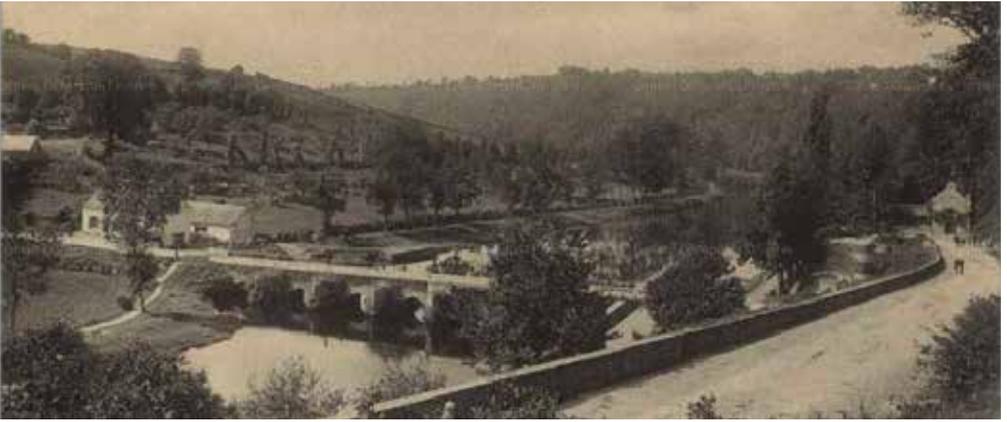
# Welcome to the Nantes-Brest Canal

**With nearly 100km of waterway punctuated by 46 locks, the Nantes-Brest Canal offers you an exceptional passage through nature in the heart of Finistère. Within Finistère, the canal harnesses the water-courses of the Aulne, the Hyères and the Kergoat.**

Since 1996 the Department of Finistère has managed the canal in Finistère with the help of the *Syndicat mixte d'aménagement touristique de l'Aulne et de l'Hyères* (SMATAH). The canal is a public waterway, 102km in length, belonging to the Brittany Region, which has conceded its management to the Département du Finistère. The latter relies on SMATAH (Agency for the touristic development of the Aulne and Hyères rivers) to operate the canal on a daily basis.

*The provisions presented in this booklet are for the purpose of information. Boaters are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the full text of the prefectorial decree N°2014-239-0001 of August 27th 2014, which is available at Lock Guily-Glaz or for download from the Department of Finistère's website.*





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## The Nantes-Brest Canal

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### HISTORY OF THE CANAL

In 1538 the Parliament of Brittany decided to make the Vilaine navigable from Rennes to Messac, allowing the first fluvial link from the Breton capital to Redon from 1585 and on to the Bay of Biscay by the tidal Vilaine. It was not until 1783 when a Commission of Interior Navigation was established that the earliest projects for navigation between Nantes and Brest began.

Construction work on the canal started in 1804 under the Empire for strategic reasons, with the renewal of hostilities with England and the Continental blockade. The superiority of the English fleet on the high seas forced Napoleon 1st to ensure that the arsenals of Brest and Lorient were supplied by an internal waterway, linked with the Loire via Nantes.

Works on a Herculean scale were required to join four river basins (*Loire, Vilaine, Blavet, Aulne*), eight rivers (*Erdre, Isac, Oust, Blavet, Kergoat, Dore, Hyères, Aulne*), construct three

cut channels (*Bout de Bois: 19,83m, Hilvern: 128,71m, Tranchée de Glomel: 183,85m*) and create 237 locks for a total length of 360kms... Spanish prisoners of war, army deserters and prisoners from the gaol in Brest, peasants, women and children slaved for years over all this. The Nantes-Brest Canal was completed for through navigation in 1842.

Breton boatmen exploited the commercial potential of this waterway with the transport of merchandise within the region. The building of roads and development of the railway were to mark the decline of transport via the canal. The construction of the hydro-electric dam at Guerlédan during the 1930s separated the sections in Finistère and Côtes d'Armor from the rest of the network.

The canal seemed doomed, but during the last twenty years its appeal for tourism has provided a new economic, social and environmental energy.





(Finistère sector)



- |  |  |  |   |                                 |
|--|--|--|---|---------------------------------|
|  | Nautical club  |  | Cycle routes                                    | <b>Tourist welcome capacity</b> |
|  | Boat hire  |  | Footpaths (GR® and PR®) registered in the       |                                 |
|  | Water supply point                                       |  | Departmental Plan for walking and hiking routes |                                 |
|  | Locks/Names of locks                                     |  | Departmental highway                            |                                 |
|  | Accessibility of Nantes-Brest Canal for pleasure-boating |  | National highway                                |                                 |
|  |  |  | Commune boundary                                |                                 |



## Boating on the Canal

The Nantes-Brest canal has been entirely navigable since 2006 thanks to the restoration of locks undertaken by the Department of Finistère and SMATAH. Today all the locks are operational and all boats with a draught of less than 1m can traverse the entire length in Finistère. Boats with a draught between 1m and 2.7m can only sail the reach of Guily-Glaz.

### PLEASE NOTE

Boats with a draught of more than 0.8m must be equipped with a depth sounder to sail securely on the canal.

### INSTRUCTIONS TO ENSURE A WORRY-FREE CRUISE

- Do not exceed the maximum canal speed limit of 6km/h, reduced to 4km/h in the access channels of locks.
- Respect the navigation channel on the towpath side at a distance of 5-10m from the bank.
- Sail on the starboard side of the channel.
- Wear a safety jacket during manoeuvres at a lock and when boarding. During navigation it is not compulsory to wear a safety jacket, but strongly recommended for the boat-master and crew.
- Reduce the speed of the boat in passing moored boats and anglers, and during crossing with another boat.

### INFORMATION FOR SMOOTH NAVIGATION

- Navigation on the canal is unsupervised. There is no toll or other tax to pay for sailing.
- The practice of motorised water-sports, notably motor-boating and water-skiing, is forbidden.
- All boaters on the canal must be in possession of a recreational inland navigation permit corresponding to their craft.
- Periods of closure to navigation for maintenance and canal restoration work are detailed by canal transport notices which can be consulted at Lock Guily-Glaz and in town halls of communes along the canal, as well as on the website of the SMATAH. (See links, page 15)
- All repairs and refurbishment of boats on public waterways are forbidden.



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## PASSING THROUGH A LOCK

### What is a lock?

A lock is a basic device to enable boats to circulate on the canal as it allows them to pass between two stretches of water on different levels (*upstream and downstream*). It functions like a hydraulic lift which uses the physical principle of “communicating vessels”.

The lock is composed of a chamber ended by two sets of gates, one upstream and one downstream.

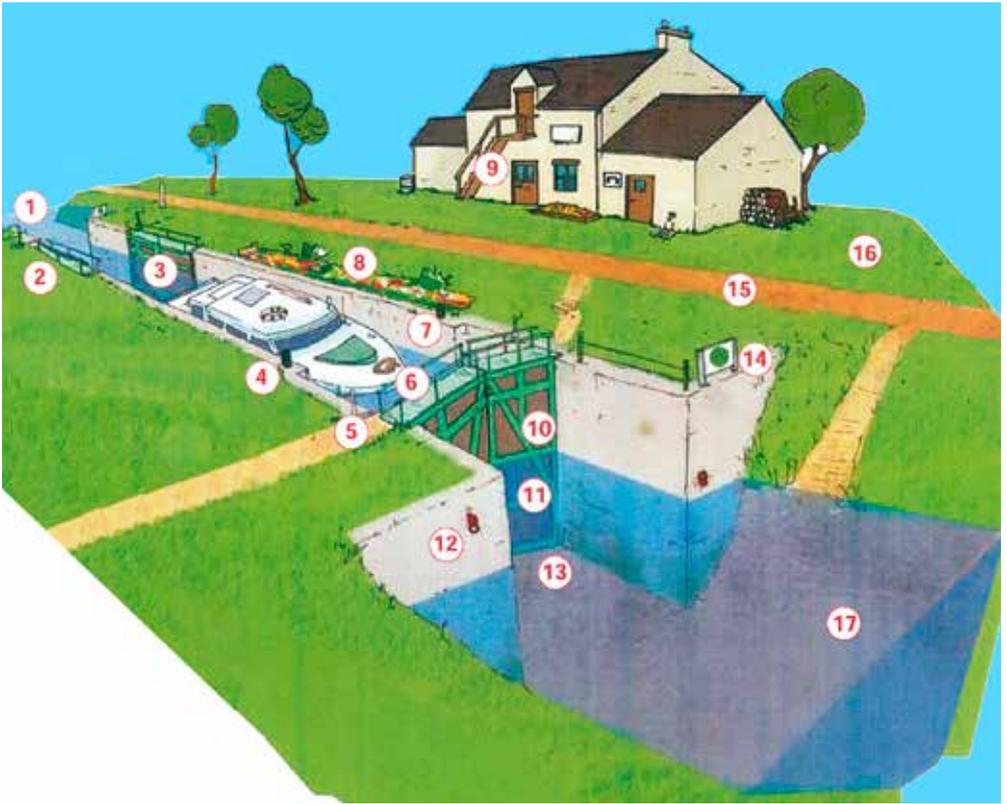
A boat moving downstream enters the lock by the upstream gate and vice versa. So before entering the lock basin, the boat-master must equalize the water level of the basin with that of the approach stream.

To change the level of water in the chamber, it is necessary to activate the gear which opens or closes the paddles at the bottom of the gates. In this way the chamber is filled or emptied before opening or closing the gates of the lock as necessary to connect with the reach upstream or downstream.

### To pass through the lock at Guily-Glaz

From Brest, the first lock is located in the commune of Port-Launay at Guily-Glaz. A lock-keeper is there to welcome you every day 2 hours 30 minutes before and 2 hours after the high tide at Brest. It takes about 30 minutes to pass through the lock at Guily-Glaz. It is imperative to act in accordance with the lock-keeper’s instructions.

Navigation on the Aulne between the Rade de Brest and Guily-Glaz at low tide is not recommended because of the risk of grounding, and passing through the lock at low tide is not permitted.



## Description of a lock

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| ① Upstream reach      | ⑩ Downstream gate    |
| ② Paddle gear         | ⑪ Paddle             |
| ③ Upstream gate       | ⑫ Mooring ring       |
| ④ Bollard             | ⑬ Lock bottom        |
| ⑤ Gate crank          | ⑭ Traffic signal     |
| ⑥ Lock chamber        | ⑮ Multi-purpose path |
| ⑦ Side wall of lock   | ⑯ Private area       |
| ⑧ Lock platform       | ⑰ Downstream reach   |
| ⑨ Lock-keeper's house |                      |



## ATTENTION

The lock at Guily-Glaz is open between 8.00am and 9pm from May 1st to September 30th and on request to the SMATAH between October 1st and April 30th. Boats must arrive at least 30 minutes before the end of service.

At the lock at Guily-Glaz every boat-master must present himself on arrival to the duty officer for the purposes of identification and information (*planned route, intended mooring, security instructions...*).

### Passing through other locks

Going through other locks on the canal requires use of a windlass to open and close the paddles on the lock gates. The procedure takes about 30 minutes.

**It is not recommended that one person alone undertakes this manoeuvre.**

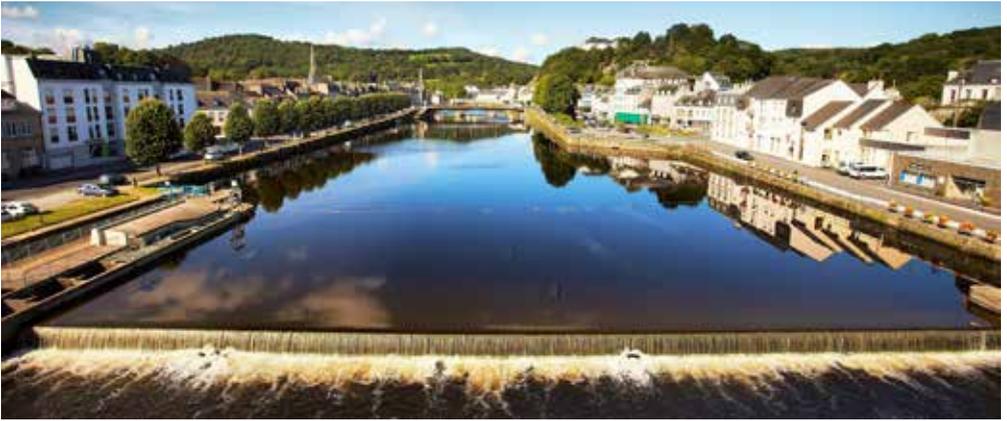
To get a windlass it is necessary to contact SMATAH in advance and then to fetch the item, either from the lock at Guily-Glaz or the headquarters of SMATAH at Lock Bizernic at Châteauneuf-du-Faou. A €60 deposit cheque will be necessary in exchange for the crank handle.

## PLEASE NOTE

To contact SMATAH  
MAISON ÉCLUSIÈRE DE BIZERNIC  
29520 CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-FAOU  
**+33 2 98 73 40 31**

### How to take a boat through the lock

Preliminaries: always leave the lock chamber empty and the downstream gates open after your passage. If two boats (one downstream and the other upstream) arrive at the same time to pass through the lock, the boat going upstream has priority, that is, the one approaching from the downstream reach.



### If you are in a boat downstream of the lock

1. Enter the lock and moor your boat to the mooring rings or bollards\* provided for this purpose.
2. Close the downstream gates and the paddles using the windlass to activate the gear. (*Wind the rod down – don't let it drop as this damages the paddles.*)
3. Open the paddles in the upstream gates with the windlass. When filling the lock chamber, the large volume of water will form a current, so you need to check your moorings constantly.
4. When the right level of water is reached – i.e. the level in the chamber is the same as that of the upstream reach - you can open the upstream gates.
5. Bring the boat out and then tie up further on near the bank because it is now necessary to empty the lock chamber.
6. Close the upstream gates as well as the paddles with the aid of the windlass. (*Wind the rod down – don't let it drop as this damages the paddles.*)
7. Open the paddles in the downstream gates.
8. When the level of the water in the chamber is the same as that of the downstream reach, open the downstream gates.
9. Then return to your boat and continue your journey.

### If you are in a boat in upstream of the lock

1. Moor upstream from the lock near the bank.
2. Close the downstream gates and paddles with the aid of the windlass. (*Wind the rod down - don't let it drop as this damages the paddles.*)
3. Open the upstream paddles.
4. When the water is level – i.e. the level in the lock chamber is the same as the upstream reach, you can open the upstream gates.
5. Bring the boat into the chamber and tie up using the mooring rings or bollards provided for this purpose.
6. Close the upstream gates and paddles. (*Wind the rod down – don't let it drop as this damages the paddles.*)
7. Open the downstream paddles. During the emptying of the chamber, the large volume of water forms a current so you need to keep a constant check on your moorings.
8. When the level of water in the chamber is the same of that of the downstream reach, open the downstream gates.
9. Then return to your boat and continue your journey.

\* See the plan on page 8



## *Mooring a boat on the canal*

Mooring a boat on the Nantes-Brest Canal is possible all year round and needs no authorisation for periods of less than a month.

To moor on the canal for longer than a month requires an authorization of temporary occupation on a public waterway (AOT) provided by the SMATAH.

This authorization is subject to payment of a licence fee, the amount in proportion to the length of the boat and the duration of the mooring (maximum one year). This authorization will not be automatically renewed and it is up to the boat-owner to take all of the necessary precautions before it expires.

Note : mooring is forbidden for longer than one month within short-term mooring areas.

### **MOORING ON THE REACH OF GUILY-GLAZ**

Obtaining a mooring permit does not grant access to a numbered place. The choice of mooring is left to the pleasure-boater, within the marked zones decreed by the Mairie of Port Launay. Maps showing these zones can be consulted at the Mairie of Port Launay or Lock Guily-Glaz.

Please respect the mooring areas indicated on the quay by colored zones :

**Red** = Mooring Forbidden

**Orange** = Mooring less than a month

**Green** = Mooring more than a month



The Communauté de Communes Pleyben-Châteaulin-Parzay offers pleasure-boaters 24/7 services :

- shower and toilet facilities are located in the premises of the Maison de la Plaisance (Pleasure-boater's House), 21 quai Amiraux Douguet, at Port Launay. For access to the Maison de la Plaisance, it is necessary to use the code that appears on the ticket delivered by the vending machine when purchasing tokens.
- electricity and drinkable water are provided via self-service supply points located on the quay (Quai des Amiraux Douguet) at Port-Launay.

In order to gain access to these facilities, boat-owners are required to purchase tokens at the vending machine located at the front of the Maison de la Plaisance, 21 quai Amiraux Douguet, at Port-Launay.

A token costs 3 €. This gives access to the water and electricity supply for 4 hours or to water in the shower for 4 minutes.

Boat-owners wishing to access continuous water and electricity supply during a period longer than 3 months should contact the Communauté de Communes Pleyben-Châteaulin-Parzay (+33 2 98 16 14 00)

- [accueil@ccpcp.bzh](mailto:accueil@ccpcp.bzh) <<mailto:accueil@ccpcp.bzh>>), in order to set up an agreement allowing permanent access to the facilities.

In the event of problems with the water, electricity or shower facilities, please contact the Guily-Glaz lock house :

+33 2 98 86 03 21

ou +33 6 88 46 33 20

### MOORING ON OTHER REACHES

Mooring on other reaches of the Nantes-Brest Canal is only permitted at the mooring berths designed for that purpose. The main sites for mooring are indicated on the map of the canal in this guide. (page 4 and 5)

## PLEASE NOTE

On all sections of the canal, mooring a boat in the navigation channel or less than 200m upstream or downstream of a lock are strictly forbidden.



## *What to do in the event of river and maritime flooding*

The Nantes-Brest Canal harnesses the watercourses of the Kergoat, the Hyères and the Aulne. In some years it is subject to winter floods likely to cause significant damage to the locks and boats moored at mooring stations.

### **ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH WATER LEVELS IN THE CANAL**

*(outside the reach of Guily-Glaz and the tidal Aulne)*

Boaters must ensure that the water level in the canal is compatible with navigation. The necessary information is made clear by a three-coloured water-level scale on the side-wall of each lock.

**Navigation is possible as long as the water level does not exceed the black line (which is 0.50m above the weir).** Navigation in full reach is still allowed at a distance of more than 100m upstream and downstream of the locks.

### **ATTENTION**

**If the water level passes the colour red, carrying canoes/kayaks around the locks is obligatory.**

### **BE AWARE OF RISKS IN THE REACH OF GUILY-GLAZ AND THE TIDAL AULNE**

The reach of Port-Launay at the end of the tidal Aulne estuary like all the canal is subject to the risk of flooding but can also be the object of marine flooding linked to the conjunction of exceptional events: low atmospheric pressures, westerly winds and high value tidal coefficients. The Department of Finistère has created a mobile barrage by Lock Guily-Glaz, and managed it since 2006.

This makes it possible to decrease the level of the water in the event of flooding at Port-Launay and Châteaulin. Outside flood periods, the barrage regulates the water in the reach of Guily-Glaz between 3.25m and 3.55m NGF (*General Levelling of France*).



## PLEASE NOTE

A presentation of the workings of the mobile barrage at Guily-Glaz is available on the website of the Department of Finistère, rubric Eau/Prévention et gestion des inondations



During exceptional circumstances (*tide of coefficient above 85 or flooding of the Aulne*), the regulation operated at Guily-Glaz might prove insufficient to maintain the rating of 3.55m NGF. It is therefore requested that boat-owners keep themselves informed about the hydrologic condition of the Aulne via:

- the national website Vigicrues
- the advice of the inland waterways organisation disseminated by the State and available at Lock Guily-Glaz, the Mairie of Port-Launay and on the website of the SMATAH. (*See useful links, page 15*)

When the “Vigicrues” yellow alert level is reached on the Aulne, navigation on the reach of Guily-Glaz is forbidden and the only acceptable movements of boats are those necessary to secure their safety.

Furthermore, all boat-owners moored on the Nantes-Brest Canal are asked to give a contact telephone number so they can be reached in an emergency if it is necessary to take action regarding their boat. At the State’s request, the Department can, in exceptional circumstances, carry out a partial or total emptying of the reach which requires boat-owners to act within 24 hours.

For this purpose it is requested that boat-owners resident outside Finistère designate an authorised person to take action regarding their boat within 24 hours.

# DISCOVER THE CANAL

SMATAH offers you the chance to discover all aspects of this waterway..

## Lock Châteaulin

Aquatic observatory for the canal's migratory fish

Châteaulin - Quai Charles de Gaulle

Keep your feet dry and see the various fish that inhabit the Aulne, Brittany's third largest coastal river. Combining a fish pass and a viewing-room, this observatory may allow you to come nose to nose with one of the large migratory fish which swim upriver after their long journey across the oceans. An innovative system of counting by video is also installed in this monitoring station.

 Observatoire Aquatique



## Lock-house Bizernic

Tourist information & History of the canal

Châteauneuf-du-Faou - Bizernic

Discover the golden age of the Breton waterways through traditional ways of life and working practices.

Temporary exhibitions, old tools, models ... reveal the workings of the waterway. Feel free to visit us, it is with pleasure that we will inform you about your stay.

 Canal Finistère Smatah



## USEFUL LINKS

**Department of Finistère**

[www.finistere.fr](http://www.finistere.fr)



**SMATAH**

[www.smatah.fr](http://www.smatah.fr)



**Brittany Region**

[www.voies-navigables.bretagne.bzh/](http://www.voies-navigables.bretagne.bzh/)

**Escales Fluviales de Bretagne**

[www.canauxdebretagne.org](http://www.canauxdebretagne.org)

**Vigicrues (information on flood risk)**

[www.vigicrues.gouv.fr](http://www.vigicrues.gouv.fr)

**SHOM (Tide times)**

[www.shom.fr](http://www.shom.fr)



**Finistère**

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LE DÉPARTEMENT



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