



EUROPEAN INLAND WATERWAYS SECTION

- Trip planning on the European Inland Waterways

by Machiel Lambooj (February 2024)

Please email any corrections or updates to eiws-editor@theca.org.uk



*This guidance note provides general information on trip planning on the European continental inland waterways. It also incorporates **green hyperlinks** for non-members to numerous additional sources of information and advice on the internet.*

*The additional Cruising Association resources mentioned are only available to CA members (please note that these links will only work if logged in). These are indicated by **blue hyperlinks** and work whenever logged in to the CA website.*

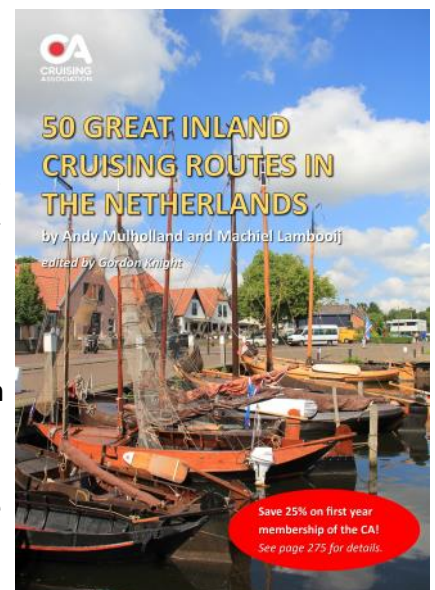
Machiel Lambooj

DESTINATION AND GENERAL PLANNING INFORMATION

Cruising information

The **European Inland Waterways Section (EIWS)** of the Cruising Association produces a total of 23 guides to help choose potential destinations on the European inland waterways and routes to get there. These are available in either PDF versions with numerous useful hyperlinks to additional online information or in print-on-demand versions. All are regularly updated - usually annually - by CA members cruising the waterways. For the PDF versions, visit the CA's [Shopify online shop](#) or for printed versions, see the print-on-demand publisher [Lulu](#).

CA members can download all of the PDF guides free of charge. They can also access additional resources via the [EIWS webpages](#). Information available here includes [Cruising information for the EIW](#). For [Belgium](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Luxembourg](#) and [The Netherlands](#) there are separate sub-sections with information and further resources. A list of useful links to further sources of information and an overview of all CA resource is available using [this link](#).



Typical CA cruising guide

Planning chart

For planning long or many trips on European inland waterways crossing various borders, the [European Waterways Map and Directory](#) is very useful (not usable for navigation, only for an overview of navigable waterways and for planning purposes; GPB 19 (2024)).

CA website resources

The CA website has a very powerful [search engine](#) (currently members-only). If you input a destination name or area in the search field in the right-hand corner of each webpage and click on the magnifying glass, you get a list of 'hits'. In the result screen, you can filter the results by content type, cruising region and forum. You can also search for topics relevant to your trip planning.

Captain's Mate

The CA has its own award-winning proprietary app, [CAptain's Mate](#), through which members can check potential destinations and read recent reports to check CA members' experiences and tips. This can be

accessed through the app (downloadable on a smartphone or tablet) or via the [web version of Captain's Mate on the CA website](#). Captain's Mate sometimes also contains critical information for certain areas/routes if there are known problems with frequently used routes/destinations.

EWIS-forum (European Inland Waterways Net)

Members can also check the EWIS-forum ([European Inland Waterways Net](#)) and search for reports on chosen destinations. Many questions have been asked and answered, so the answer to your question may be already online.

Advice from fellow CA members while underway

With internet connectivity, CA members can also access the above resources while underway and check whether a question has been asked and answered before. Often that is the case! In the event of an urgent problem that is not yet flagged on any of the CA Resources (use the search functionality on the CA website first), a message can be posted on the [European Inland Waterways Net](#).

EUROPE-WIDE CRUISE PLANNING

Rules of the water ways

An essential download is the guide to the [CEVNI rules of the waterways](#) on the continent. Each CEVNI member state has its own domestic version of the CEVNI rules, but the basis is always the CEVNI rules. They are different from the ColRegs (Collision Regulations) that apply to the seas. You are supposed to know the CEVNI rules, including the meaning of traffic signs, when cruising the continental inland waters.

Licence requirements

In many countries there is a licence requirement for the skipper. This is usually the case if your ship exceeds a certain length (generally 15m) or is capable of higher speeds (generally >20 km/h). In some countries (Germany/France) the speed rule is replaced by a certain engine power level. If your boat qualifies under these rules, you need an **ICC licence** to operate your boat on the continent; there are two ICC licences: Inland and Coastal. In some countries you may also need a licence for smaller boats exceeding a certain engine power (e.g. Germany). More information on obtaining an ICC is available [here](#). You also need a 'ship station licence' listing all means of transmission on board and a licence to use them (e.g. SRC certificate).

VHF radio requirements

The so-called RAINWAT rules apply to VHF radio traffic on the continent. You need an 'ATIS enabled' VHF set with the new (VDES) compatible channel set, which differs from the regular UK/Intl set. You may have to re-programme your existing VHF set or if you set cannot comply with the RAINWAT rules buy a new set (Belgium, Germany). You need an ATIS number ([OFCOM info](#) on obtaining an ATIS number) and to programme it in your VHF set(s). There are relatively cheap portable VHF sets with ATIS purchasable in continental chandleries (only buy in the UK if you are certain that it has ATIS capabilities). If you bring your (OFCOM issued) ATIS number, it can be immediately programmed by the chandlery. Note that portable VHF sets are formally not allowed on pleasure craft in Germany.



A VHF needs to be ATIS compliant

Radar

in restricted visibility, you are often not allowed to navigate on inland waterways without an approved inland water radar and a professional radar certificate. Generally, yacht radars and yachtsman radar certificates do not qualify.

AIS transceiver

Not obligatory for pleasure craft with a length under 20m, except in certain areas (Antwerp Harbour), but highly recommended on all busy waterways with a lot of commercial barge traffic for your own safety (see others and be seen).

Fairway information systems

Before casting off every day, it's useful to check the fairway information system of the country you are visiting for planned or unplanned closures on your planned route for the next couple of days. These Fairway Information System generally provide information on planned and unplanned closures, notices to skippers, bridge heights, opening hours, water levels, ice condition (where relevant) and contact details for locks and bridges. Most of these systems focus on commercial barges and may not provide details on smaller waterways where commercial barges do not travel. These systems do not always provide information in English but in the local language (you may then need to use Google Translate or similar). Some of these systems work based on charts that show objects/waterways where there is a notification on which you then can click. You can also often take a free subscription to receive automatic e-mail alerts for certain routes or waterways/areas.

[Euris \(European River Information Services\)](#)

Provides easy access to all information you need as a skipper on the *main* European waterways. Access through a map possible. Click on the map till you see notifications on your intended route. Key information in English. Details may be in the local language.

[Danube FIS](#)

Provides similar information on the whole of the Danube/Donau river. (Link provided is to the English language section); some details are in the original country language; use google translate where relevant. Zoom in for details on chart sections. Also includes details on authorities (customs/immigration) with contact information, freely downloadable charts, including in some charts information on rules/traffic signs.

Voyage planning

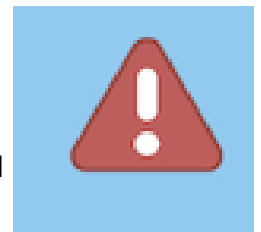
[Euris](#) contains free voyage planning (online) for commercial barges but is also useful as planning tool on main waterways. It gives information on all objects on the routes in terms of air draught/closures, number of locks etc.

[Navionics boating app](#)

Contains route planning software that also works on inland waterways. However, the level of details of this chart is rudimentary in inland waters. You can plan a route on the app and if you have a suitable plotter with connectivity, you can send the planned route from your PC/tablet to the plotter.

Waterkaarten app

The (originally Dutch) ANWB [Waterkaarten app](#), now called **Nautical Maps** in the app stores; paid subscription) has expanded to various European countries. The content outside the Netherlands is still rudimentary and route-planning currently only works within the Netherlands. But if you buy a subscription for use in the Netherlands, you can also use it elsewhere. Increasingly, information from the Euris fairway information system is fed into the app. Information directly from Fairway Information Systems is depicted on the correct place on the waterways with the adjacent sign. An info sheet on the usage of this product is [available for download](#) (currently by CA members only).



Weather

For severe weather alerts, consider [meteo-alarm](#) for alerts in continental Europe, overall and by country. For cruising, especially on open waters, it is advisable to use apps with the most reliable forecast models: ECMWF (9 km grid) or UKV (2 km grid). A free website that uses these models: [windy.com](#) (premium version for some features); also available as app in the app store (use 'Windy.com' to search as there is also a competitor with a similar name).

CRUISE PLANNING - Austria and Donau/Danube

Fairway information System

The [Doris](#) system gives hourly updates on the status of the Donau/Danube, including water levels/ice status, status of locks, and height of bridges. The link provided is to the information in English, which is self-explanatory. For the whole of the Danube/Donau area: see [Danube FIS](#) (above under Continent resources).

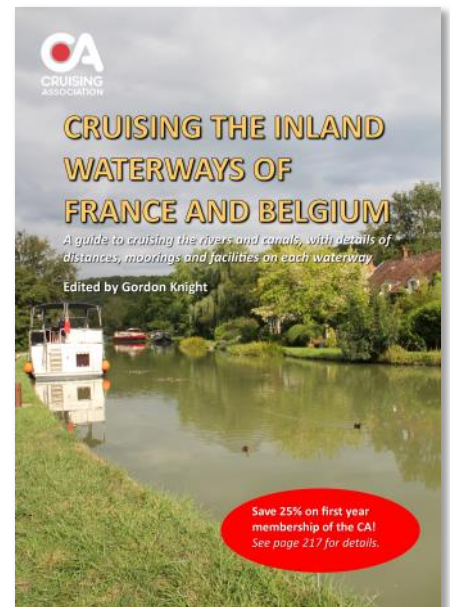
CRUISE PLANNING - Belgium

Cruising information

There is a CA Cruising guide which is regularly updated - usually annually - by CA members cruising the waterways.: **Cruising the Inland Waterways of France and Belgium**. It can be downloaded free by CA members or can be purchased by non-members. If not already a CA member, for the PDF versions visit the CA's [Shopify online shop](#) or for printed versions, see the print-on-demand publisher [Lulu](#).

Special rules

- ◆ You need an ICC if your boat has a length of 15m or more or is capable of speeds of 20 km/h or more. ICC Coastal on the sea and ICC inland on the inland waterways. In the Antwerp Harbour area, a skipper of every type of pleasure craft needs an ICC.
- ◆ FD number Antwerp Harbour: you need an administrative number for your vessel before entering the Antwerp harbour. You can find an application form [here](#) (in Dutch, use Google Translate) – this form is from the Antwerp Marina (Scheldt and Willemdok). They will relay this to the Harbour Authority on your behalf. You do not need an FD number if you go on the Scheldt to the marina on the Scheldt itself or if you go from the Scheldt through the Kattendijksluis directly to the Willemdok marina and back.
- ◆ Pleasure craft with a length from 7m upwards must have one VHF radio on board (this may be a portable VHF).
- ◆ On the Scheldt from sea to Antwerp, there is a compulsory listening watch for pleasure craft on the relevant VTS-VHF channel. See [here](#) for details. Select EN in right hand top corner if not in English.
- ◆ Having a working AIS transceiver is obligatory if you enter the Antwerp Harbour area. (Not the Scheldt, but the actual Harbour area (e.g. going to the Willemdok Marina)).
- ◆ In Flemish waters, all boats of 6m length or over need a vignette; you can arrange this online and pay for it; more information [here](#). This does not apply to the Canal Gent-Terneuzen, the Canal Brugge-Zeebrugge, Grensleie, the common Maas, Beneden-Zeeschelde, the Schelde-Rijn canal and the Harbour of Antwerp itself. You can therefore travel licence free from Tholen (in the Netherlands) to the Willemdok marina.
- ◆ In the waterways of Wallonia (French speaking part) you need to record your intended trip and report any deviation. You need to visit the lockkeeper's office of the first lock you encounter, take your boat papers with you and record you intended route. If you decide to deviate from this route, you must report this at the next lock. For a list of locks where you can report, go [here](#) (only in French) and look at item 3.3 (*Bureaux d'émission des permis de circulation*).
- ◆ You must have a copy of the Belgian rules of the road on board (in Dutch/French). This is included in the Dutch ANWB Wateralmanak part I (see under The Netherlands). You can also download these rules [here](#) and print them out or have them directly available digitally.



The CA's Belgium cruising guide

- ◆ There are minimum (safety) requirements for Belgian boats. However, these seem not to actively police for foreign visiting boats. If you have safety equipment on board make sure that they are not past their official inspection dates.

Fairway information System

VisuRIS This system is for the Flemish waterways. Set the language from NL to EN. The content then changes into hybrid content: some of the content is in English, but most of the details remain in the original language. Use Google translate. A chart shows with round 'anchors' where there are notifications. Check your route for these notifications and open them. *Recente scheepvaartberichten* (recent notices to skippers) shows the latest notifications. *Recente hydrometeo gegevens* (recent data on water streams) presents information with water level impact.

For the waterways in Wallonia (the French speaking part) fairway information is included in the **EURIS** system.

Charts

Nautical maps (**Waterkaarten**), although starting as a Dutch-only product, now intends to also provide nautical chart information on inland waterways in Belgium. It currently contains rudimentary information on Belgium waterways. In the past there were very useful local Belgian waterway charts and guides. However, these are for some time no longer updated and no reprints are made. There is an older Imray guide (2005) in English that is also not updated.

Voyage planning

On **VisuRIS** there is a limited voyage planner ('reisplanner') meant for commercial barges that may provide some useful information.

There is a government app called Pleasure Boating that is providing route planning in Belgium and provides various forms of information (also in English). The app can be downloaded in the **Google Play Store** and the Apple **App Store**. At the time of publication it worked but was extremely slow and buggy. Perhaps at the start of the 2024 season, it will work better.

Tidal information

The Scheldt is a tidal river up to Ghent. To travel from Antwerp to Ghent, you need to plan your trip based on tidal information, both in terms of available water depth and in terms of the direction of the tidal stream. You would want to travel with the tidal stream. Refer to tideschart.com for **Antwerp** and **Gentbrugge**. Please note that the *Kattendijksluis* In Antwerp (the lock for pleasure craft between the Harbour of Antwerp and the tidal Scheldt) can only operate with water levels in the Scheldt between 2.2m and 4.6m. Consult the applicable table at the bottom of this page (varies by year, as it depends on tidal information) [here](#).

Water levels

See **VisuRIS** above. **Waterinfo.be** also provides (in Flemish only) more detailed information on water levels. There are four categories: *overstroming* (flooding), *Getij* (tidal), *Neerslag* (precipitation), and *droogte* (drought). If you click on one of these categories, you get a chart with colour-coded measure points. Green (*normaal* = normal), Yellow (*prewaak* = alert), Red (problem). For a report on non-navigable waterways due to lack of sufficient water look for a news item with the title '*Laagwaterbericht Waterwegen*' (low water level report waterways), open it and google translate its contents.

For the Wallonia waterways, [here](#) you will find a colour-coded chart on water levels (green is ok; flooding information). Details in French only.

CRUISE PLANNING - France

Locks and bridges on the French inland waterways have been built with boats in mind with the following maximum dimensions: beam 5m (16.4 ft), draught 1.8m (5.9 ft) and height (air draught) 3.5m (11.4 ft). It makes sense to keep well within these restrictions. Refer to the CA guide **Through France via the inland Waterways** for more details and exceptions (free download for logged-in CA members). Non-members can purchase the PDF versions from the CA's [Shopify online shop](#) or printed versions from the print-on-demand publisher [Lulu](#). There also a total of 17 further moorings guides to the French canals and rivers available from the same source.

Special rules

- ♦ You need an ICC if your boat has a motor of more than 4.5 kW/6 PK. Coastal/Inland depending on the area in which you travel.
- ♦ There are minimum safety equipment rules applicable: see [here](#). If you have safety equipment on board, make sure that it is not past the official inspection date, as you may then be fined if that equipment is required under the French rules.
- ♦ For French inland waterways managed by VNF, you need to purchase a vignette. More information can be found [here](#). If not in English, you can select another language by clicking on the FR button. Explanation of the process, ordering and paying can be found there. Underlying details (e.g. FAQ) may be in French.

Fairway information System

Most useful information can be found at the government website of the [VNF \(in French\)](#). You can download a chart of the waterways (*Téléchargement*) and find information on the network (*Info reseau*), with notifications (*avis à la batellerie*), the state of the network (*Situation du reseau*), and the availability of sufficient water (*Etat des reserves en eau*). It is also useful to check the planned works in the relevant year (*Nos chantiers en YYYY*). *Chômages* means closures. *Navigation interrompue* means no navigation possible. *Navigation restreinte* means restrictions to navigation. *Arret/date de début*: start date of the closure; *Reprise de la navigation/date de fin*: end date of the closure.

[Navi](#) is a very useful app that provides most of the above information on a mobile phone or tablet. Search for 'NAVI VNF' in your app store. The app should adapt to the language of the mobile phone or tablet on which it is installed, but underlying information is still in French.

Charts

Inland Waterways International publishes useful printed guides/charts on French inland waterways. Refer to their [online shop](#).

Voyage planning

[Fluviacap](#) provides an online itinerary planning service offered by the major publisher Fluviacarte.

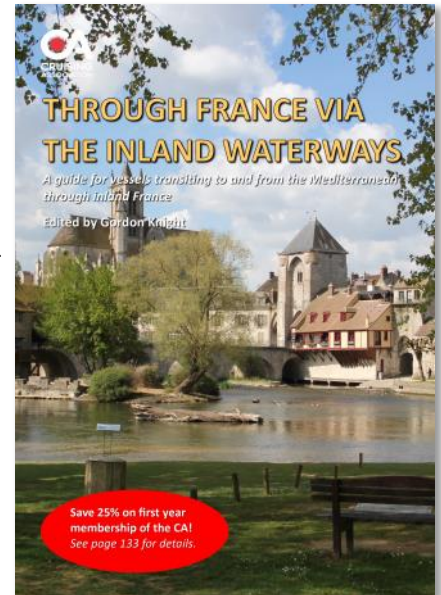
[French Waterways](#) A privately-run website with advice on cruising the French inland waterways, including detailed information on each waterway (in English)

Water levels

A chart with colour-coded information on water levels (flooding information only) can be found [here](#). This is a government-funded site providing up to date information on current flood risks on all French rivers.

Water plants

Water plants are a major issue on the French part of the Meuse, especially when temperatures rise; it can prevent normal navigation or if not, you may need to clean your water intake filters regularly. In early spring the issue is normally less of a problem.



One of 19 France cruising guides

CRUISE PLANNING - Germany

Cruising information

CA Guides are available on **The German Rhine** and the **The River Moselle/Mosel**. Both are free to download for CA members. Non-members can purchase the PDF versions from the CA's [Shopify online shop](#) or printed versions from the print-on-demand publisher [Lulu](#).

Special rules

An overview of German boating rules can be found [here](#).

- ◆ You need an ICC licence on the if your engine power exceeds 11.03 kW/ 15 hp (>3.68 kW/5 hp on the Rhine). ICC coastal or inland depending on where you travel.
- ◆ If your boat has a hull length of 20m or larger you need in addition to a licence a Rhine patent for every stretch of the river Rhine you intend to travel. In practice, this is not feasible for occasional visitors.
- ◆ Portable VHF radios are not formally allowed to be used on pleasure craft.

More information (in English) on Germany can be found in the [ADAC Skipper-Portal](#). (ADAC is the German equivalent of the AA).

Fairway information System

[ELWIS](#) provides a chart with layers of information on the (main) German waterways. Including warnings, closures, ice and water level information. The link provided is to a chart from the federal government loaded with Elwis information and meta information in English. It is colour-coded; so you can see whether the waterways are ok (**green**), there is an issue (**yellow**, click for details) or there is a major issue like a closure (**red/pink**, click for details). It is available in English, but the underlying information is sometimes in German. Use Google translate. The main [Elwis website](#) contains more details but is completely in German. (*Binnenschiffahrt* is for commercial craft; *Sportschiffahrt* is for pleasure craft).

While travelling to or in Germany, you can take out a free e-mail subscription to urgent traffic information on a route you plan to take. More information (also in English, look for the British flag) [here](#). The information e-mailed may be (partially) in German.

See [Ems-Jade Kanal](#) for detailed fairway status info on this much-used sheltered route to get from Emden to Wilhelmshaven

Charts

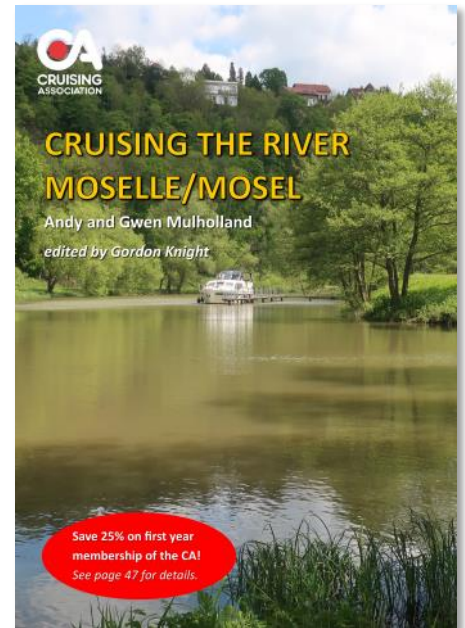
Navionics and **Waterkaarten.app** also provide electronic water charts for inland waterways, although the details are rudimentary. NV charts (a German product) provide more details, but only cover some rivers directly connected to the sea and only for a limited distance from the sea, therefore, not suitable for all inland waterways. [Kartenwerft](#) (printed and digital) and [Delius Klasing](#) (digital) provide (paid) detailed maps for all German inland Waterways. Delius Klasing is relatively cheap. [Navinaut](#) is a new player that provides (subscription based) nautical information overlaid on normal street maps, with information on traffic signs, buoys, operating hours of locks etc. Only in German.

Voyage planning

Limited information (in English) on Germany for voyage planning purposes can be found in the [ADAC Skipper-Portal](#). (ADAC is the German equivalent of the AA).

[Yachtweb Portwiki](#) List of over 750 sport boat harbours throughout Germany.

[Navinaut](#) has a (new) online voyage planning tool (in German) for all German inland waterways (paid sub-



The CA's Mosel cruising guide

scription). You give in your start point, your destination point and your boat details and the tool provides a suggestion for a route. Along the route details of marinas etc. are given.

Tidal information

In Northern Germany, parts of the rivers Unter-Ems, Weser (Bremerhaven-Bremen) and Elbe (to Hamburg) are tidal waters with some strong tidal current. It is recommended to travel with the tidal current if possible. Check tide-forecast.com for free tidal information for these cities or look at the tidal entries in Navionics.

Water levels

Use [ELWIS](#) (see above) for information on water levels (both too high and too low to allow navigation). Alternatively, and with more details, go to <https://pegelonline.wsv.de> which contains (under 'Aktuelle Lage' a colour-coded chart with water levels). There are also detailed tables for various locations on the inland waterways.

CRUISE PLANNING - Luxembourg

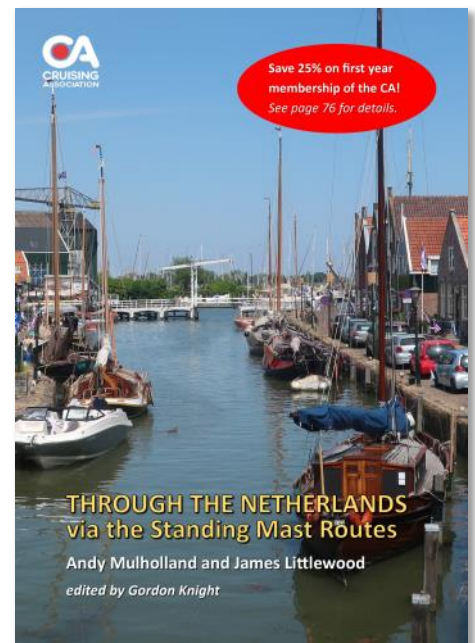
The only navigable waterway in Luxembourg is the river Mosel (German)/Moselle (French) which borders on Germany and France. For information on this river see Germany/France.

CRUISE PLANNING - The Netherlands

The CA has two Cruising Guides: **Through the Netherlands via the Standing Mast Route** and **50 Great Inland Cruising Routes in the Netherlands**. In 2024 a Cruising Guide on **Cruising the Dutch Islands of the Waddenzee** will be added. These guides can be downloaded for free by CA members. Non-members can purchase the PDF versions from the CA's [Shopify online shop](#) or printed versions from the print-on-demand publisher [Lulu](#).

Special rules

- ◆ In the Netherlands you need an ICC if your boat has a hull length of 15m or larger or is capable of speeds of 20 km/h or more. You need the ICC **Coastal** in the large sea arms in Zeeland (Westerschelde), Eems Dollard and large open inland waters like IJsselmeer, Markermeer and the various Randmeren (waterways south and east of Flevoland) although they are considered to be inland waters by their users.
- ◆ For regulatory purposes and traffic rules, the Westerschelde and the Eems/Dollard are 'sea' and not inland waterways (the Collision Regulations apply). Other large open waters, such as IJsselmeer, the other open waters of Zeeland and the Wadden Sea (Waddenzee) are inland waters for water traffic rules (the Dutch version of the CEVNI rules apply).
- ◆ You need to have a copy of the Dutch version of the CEVNI rules (BPR) aboard. This is included in the Waterkaarten app or you can download a copy [here](#) or have them directly available digitally.
- ◆ Cruising the canals of Amsterdam, including the Kostverlorenvaart (part of the Standing Mast Route) requires a vignette. No vignette is required passing Amsterdam on the route Haarlem/IJmuiden, Noord-Zee Kanaal, het IJ, Oranje sluizen, Markermeer, vice versa. More information on this topic can be found on the [municipal website](#). The CA produced a Guidance note on how to purchase a vignette (which is quite cumbersome) that can be found [here](#) (also available to non-members).



One of two Netherlands cruising guides

Fairway information System

The actual status of the waterways and notifications to shipping can be found [here](#) in map form; after clicking on this link go to the left corner and select “English”.

Charts

The historically most used and most complete product is the [Waterkaarten app](#) (available also for PC) In app stores it is called ‘Nautical Maps’ and requires a subscription. Previously known as ANWB Waterkaarten, it includes (if you have a live internet connection) actual fairway information and details (including operating hours) of all locks, bridges and marinas.

A free recent alternative, with limited information, is [Waterkaart.net](#). There is also an app. Some of the more detailed information needs to be unlocked by taking out a subscription on the premium version.

A rudimentary, free, app with inland waterways charts can be found [here \(Vaarkart Nederland\)](#).

Printed charts from the ANWB are also available from chandleries, where you can also purchase ANWB Wateralmanak 1 (rules) and 2 (detailed information on marinas and waterways). All in Dutch. Most of this information (except speed limits and deviating rules on specific waterways, which are only included in the printed ANWB Wateralmanak 2) is included in the [Waterkaarten app](#), so you do not need to buy both products (ANWB is the Dutch equivalent of the AA).

Voyage planning

Both the [Waterkaarten app](#) and the online [Waterkaart.net](#) have a route planner function. Both provide information on bridges, locks and marinas on the map which are clickable for more details.

[SMR Status](#) An interactive map with the actual status (colour-coded) of the Standing Mast Route through the Netherlands. (If a CA member, see Captain’s Mate for ‘SMR’ for more information on longer closures).

[Wadden Islands](#) Shows availability of moorings, travel advice and contact information on the Dutch Frisian Islands.

[De Havengids](#) A commercial online harbour guide, also freely available in printed form at marinas.

[Varendoejesamen](#) (cruising together) is a joint project of the government and the marine industry on safe boating. It also publishes downloadable brochures in English on various safety aspects of boating in the Netherlands, including on the [Standing Mast Route](#), the use of the [blue sign](#) (by commercial shipping on the large rivers) and (in Dutch) various more difficult waterway crossings (*Knooppunten*) where pleasure craft and commercial shipping encounter each other, including VHF block channels and detailed charts of such crossings. These *Knooppunten* brochures can be downloaded [here](#) (in Dutch only).

Water levels

[Hydrostatus](#) A government site showing water levels on main waterways with colour-coding.

Water plants

The Markermeer and the waterways to the immediate south and east of Flevoland (Randmeren) increasingly have issues with water plants blocking navigation for pleasure craft. The buoyed channels are – in season – regularly mowed. [Waterplanten.nu](#) shows the current impact of water plants (based on aerial surveillance) on navigation and the mowing status thereof - in Dutch, but self-explanatory.

Notice: all links were functioning at the time of production. If you notice broken links or have other suggestions or comments, please e-mail to eiws-editor@theca.org.uk.

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